

THE IDEA(L) OF THE 'GROUP' IN RADICAL THEATRE:  
A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS OF THREE AMERICAN THEATRE GROUPS  
OF THE 1960s

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## Abstract

In the 1960s 'groupishness' appears to have been a common phenomenon, especially amongst the young. In America, a major movement developed that combined the politics of the New Left with what are often described as 'countercultural' influences - sexual freedom, drug experimentation, Eastern mysticism, and communal living - to comprise 'the Movement'. Group experimentation was a cornerstone of the Movement. American radical theatres were a cornerstone of the Movement. These theatres experimented extensively with group work, usually under the rubric of 'collective creation'.

This thesis examines three American radical theatres of the 1960s, the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group, in the context of their ideas and ideals about the group as they were expressed both on stage and off. Using concepts advanced by W.R. Bion, Erving Goffman, Rosabeth Kanter and Victor Turner, it is argued that an underlying 'ultrademocratic', i.e., anti-hierarchical-yet-individualistic, 'liminoid' group paradigm affected all three radical theatres to varying degrees. This paradigm combined an idea of the group as a potential threat to individual autonomy with an idealised image of the group as a conduit to *communitas*. The ways in which these theatres sought to create, express and reconcile the existential, normative and ideological dimensions of *communitas*, and their attendant efforts at celebrating individuality or effacing individualism are considered. The Living Theatre's *Paradise Now* (1968), the San Francisco Mime Troupe's *The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* (1965), the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* (1968), and the concept of 'Guerrilla Theatre' as espoused both by the Mime Troupe and a Mime Troupe offshoot, the Diggers, are analysed in this regard, as are other particular productions. Detailed attention is given to the position of the director as leader in a climate of ultrademocracy.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

The soloist – performance art – has taken root as the new focus of experimental theatre, and the ensemble seems to have faded from the scene. Despite the popularity of an extraordinary performer/writer like Spalding Gray, the great era in American experimental theatre may be over. Most of the important performance ensembles have dissolved, or continue under compromised circumstances. The Living Theatre is today a dated parody of itself. The Open Theatre is no more, and its successors (Chaikin's Winter Projects and the Talking Band) have not achieved equivalent artistic distinction. The individual artists Mabou Mines stay together as an administrative entity, but they no longer perform as a collective ensemble. Serban's Great Jones Repertory Company is also gone. Only the Wooster Group (successor to the Performance Group) holds on as a regular producing organization, along with veteran political companies: Bread and Puppet Theatre (now based in Vermont), El Teatro Campesino and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. ([Robert] Marx, 1986: 55-56)

Although many of the people [...] still work in the theatre, or some aspect of performance, and some groups still exist, the collective output of the people and groups no longer dominates consciousness. The scene isn't so important – it's not implicated or even consulted in rethinking society. Once more performance is ephemeral. I look at the period from the mid-'50s through the '70s and see the people, the groups, the works in receding perspective: a parade passed, with reverberations from ever more distant drums; or a thunderstorm come and gone, with an occasional flash still visible, but no promise of more. (Schechner, 1982: 23)

The farther back we go into history, the more the individual and, therefore, the producing individual seems to depend on and belong to a larger whole: at first it is, quite naturally, the family and the clan, which is but an enlarged family; later on, it is the community growing up in its different forms out of the clash and the amalgamation of clans. It is only in the eighteenth century, in 'civil society', that the different forms of social union confront the individual as a mere means to his private ends, as an external necessity. But the period in which this standpoint – that of the isolated individual – became prevalent is the very one in which the social relations of society (universal relations according to that standpoint) have reached the highest state of development. Man is in the most literal sense of the word a *zoon politikon*, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society. ([Karl] Marx, 1986: 4)

### Rationale and hypothesis

The three quotations above encapsulate the problematique in this thesis. In Western industrialised capitalist societies, according to Karl Marx (the quote above is from his 1857 introduction to the *Grundrisse*), it is the collective, not the individual, that has become an alienated or estranged entity, despite the fundamentally social nature of a person's individuality and the proliferation of new social institutions and new social demands. In the 1960s, a number of theatres, along with many other institutions, seemed to promise, if not the full restoration of community, then at least the mitigation of a sense of alienation through a collective working approach. Critic Clive Barnes speculated, in 1969, as to whether theatre was about to become the equivalent of religious communion for the young generation in a secular society:

There does seem to be some need in every kind of society for people to get together, to kind of hold hands, to sing songs together; there is a need for a community spirit and some need for men to be able to identify themselves in some kind of pattern of human ritual. Now there are very few places, if you remove religion or if you have a society that for the most part avoids religion, where you can achieve that sense of ritual, that sense of togetherness. I notice very strongly that one of the things about the Living Theatre of *Paradise Now* was these kids were having desperately [sic] a religious experience, they were coming together with people in a way that they would have perhaps in other generations done in church. This struck me as a very interesting phenomenon, and I think it is a need that the theater more and more is going to fill. Because only in the theater – unless there is a religious revival, I think this is going to have to be one of the strange functions of the theater, because only in the theater and perhaps the sports arena are people capable of feeling this particular thing of togetherness, this particular feeling of being part of a society. (qtd. in Umlas, 1976: 246)

Yet, the earlier quoted comments by theatre critic Robert Marx and theorist-cum-director Richard Schechner, the latter perhaps one of the key advocates of theatre as a secular, yet potentially transcendental, ritual in the 1960s, suggest that Barnes was too optimistic. Theatre, it would appear, could resist, but not overcome, the atomising pressures of a capitalist society, and, in the final analysis, the theatre of the 1960s failed to meet its promise.

In this thesis I reappraise American radical theatre groups of the 1960s, specifically their experiences as group entities, both against Karl Marx's claim about the eclipse of collectivity in modern 'civil society' and against the perception that the radical ensemble theatre approach failed to make a difference. The 1960s period was a high water mark in widespread enthusiasm for group activity. It was the 'we' decade, and the group, as an idealised entity, assumed positive normative status: the group was inherently good. Radical American theatres of the 1960s seem to have readily embraced 'groupism' as an ideal. Mention of the Living Theatre, for example, often evokes images of androgynous, long-haired nude performers engaged in 'group gropes', shouting protest slogans and attempting to commune with the audience, often all at the same time. Although the Living Theatre may have been more emphatic than most other groups in its expression of this belief in the goodness of the group, it was archetypal insofar as it showed a radical shift away from individual characterisation and the telling of an individual's story in a linear fashion, towards a celebration of collective action, communal experience, and communion. Indeed, many groups, including the Performance Group, the Open Theatre, and dozens of short-lived 'guerrilla theatre' groups, did things on stage which visually, at least, valorised the principle of working in unison, the performers clustered as a single organic entity, rather than parading their talents as singular individuals or artists.

In broad terms, this thesis asks the following:

- How was the ideal of the group as a social phenomenon in the 1960s performed by radical American theatres?
- What were the politics of the group experience?
- What prototypes of the group experience, if any, did radical theatres employ in order to realise the group ideal?

- Was the group ideal some kind of ephemeral countercultural fad?
- Given that the 'politics of experience' as espoused by R.D. Laing, Timothy Leary and others in America in the 1960s was often a politics of the individual experience, or the liberation of the individual, how was this reconciled with a parallel idealisation of the group?
- Has the group ideal left a legacy, or has it simply faded into the distance, as commentators such as Schechner and Robert Marx seem to think?

The central hypothesis in this discussion is that the group ideal in the 1960s was an inherently contradictory phenomenon, hence my use of the word *idea(l)* in bracketed form. The contradictions lay in the search for boundless and unstructured communion, or what Victor Turner has described as 'existential *communitas*', alongside the knowledge that its perpetuation will inevitably entail attenuation of freedom in favour of codes and order, which Turner terms 'normative *communitas*', and an accompanying sense of the need for some sort of holistic, utopian vision, or 'ideological' *communitas*. To complicate this further, in America at least, underlying the high-minded optimism about the power of the collective, the ideal, was a less sanguine *idea* about the group and its dangers. I argue that in American society there was a pre-existing socially constructed idea that privileged individualism, a filter through which, despite the best of intentions in many cases, all ideals first had to pass. It was not a matter of choosing either a more collectivist or more individualist way of living. It was a matter of attempting to reconcile non-individualist needs and urges with an underlying pro-individualist standpoint within American culture.

This produced a group *idea(l)* predicated, on the surface at least, upon the absence of the individual, a radical egalitarianism that attacked perceived symbols of individualism, including leadership figures. Yet this took place in the absence of an alternative structure for, and politics of, the group experience beyond the paradigm of the middle-class 'nuclear family', an artificial and highly neurotic type of group in the view of many sociologists and psychologists. So, while positive associations were attached to group membership, individuality, insofar as it tended to be confused with the imposition of an 'authoritarian personality', as Adorno and others had cautioned, was outlawed within the counterculture during the 1960s. And yet a belief in the sanctity of the expression of individuality was never quite effaced, and the spectre of the family dynamic was never entirely banished from the group experience.

As I shall argue, these factors caused particular problems for *auteur* founder/leaders of radical theatre groups. There were many leaders who seem to have embraced the collective principle as sincerely as anyone, but who, ultimately, wanted to lead their groups. Some leaders also formed more or less conventional parental pairings within their groups. The return of the repressed leader, and the spectral parents, emerge as key themes in this thesis.

While there was widespread sympathy and praise for communism or socialism as practised in Europe, China, South East Asia and Latin America, and the relevant leadership figures (Mao Tse Tung, Ho Chi Min, and Fidel Castro), rarely was the model of the communist collective or commune embraced. Instead, the libertarian anarchist form of the 'communal commune' was given priority, but always with the proviso that as an individual you could 'do your own thing' as long as you did not 'ego trip' at the expense of others. Conceptually, it could be described as an attempt to reconcile a Freudian, or neo-Freudian, view of the individual as an autonomous though typically troubled entity with Marx's view of the individual as a social construction. In essence I will argue that the group idea(l) in America in the 1960s was a confrontation between existential *communitas* and a special blend of normative and ideological *communitas*, which equates with what Weinberg and others have termed 'ultrademocracy' (Weinberg, 1992: 23), an attempt to deny any notion of hierarchy whatsoever.<sup>1</sup>

Today, it is easy to regard such efforts and experiments as naïve. This is especially so when considering the emergence of radical groups such as the Weather Underground, where revolutionary actions by remnants of the once pacifist Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were attempted in a climate of rabid fear and hostility surrounding the notion of leadership. One could liken the latter to an attempt to launch the Cuban revolution without Ché or Castro. Yet this kind of radical egalitarianism was seen as a serious and ineluctable challenge by those in the New Left, the counterculture and/or 'the Movement'. However extreme some of the policies and practices may seem in hindsight, they have no doubt contributed to the milder forms of participatory democracy that have thrived in subsequent decades. To this must also be added the fact that humour, play, and sheer delight in experience were intermingled with these more sober aims. The ultrademocratic historical 'moment', despite its inconsistencies or contradictions, merits greater attention than is customarily afforded it.

In order to analyse in detail how the ultrademocratic moment was enacted, I revisit the group idea(l) as it was manifested in three American radical theatres of the 1960s, the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group. The three groups are often seen as paragons of the ethics and aesthetics of the 1960s, and yet all three groups, in their own particular ways, imploded at almost exactly the same point in 1969, as if in sync with the general 'bad karma' that produced the Manson family killings, Altamont, and the cynical cinematic coda to the decade, *Easy Rider*, in the same year.

I use the word 'revisit' because several authors have discussed the gravitation towards group-based work in the 1960s in their commentaries on developments in American theatre of the post-war era. Typically, the matter has been discussed under headings such as experimental theatre (Croyden, 1974; Roose-Evans, 1973), the avant-garde (Schechner, 1982: 13-107; Vanden Heuvel, 1993: 25-66), environmental theatre

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<sup>1</sup> Weinberg sources the term to Barry Oppen of the Provisional Theatre and a paper delivered by Oppen to an American Theatre Association Annual Convention in August 1980 (Weinberg, 1992: 255). I have not been able to find other usage of the term, but I have used it since it usefully connotes a sense of hypertrophy of an otherwise widely embraced and defended concept.



(Schechner, 1973), alternative theatre (Shank, 1982), in which lies a theatre of social change (50-90), and the theatre of commitment (Brockett, 1971: 144-47; Bigsby, 1985: 291-440). Croyden, for example, describes the group phenomenon in the following terms:

The new practitioners, believing that their efforts should be collaborative and egalitarian, organised themselves into communes; others worked in cooperative groups. The spirit of the times had produced a compelling need for connection and collectivism among the youth, who felt necessarily alienated from the adult world. Actors and directors, like college radicals who were 'tuned in' to Timothy Leary's admonition to 'drop out' and 'turn on,' became part of the counterculture groups springing up all over the country, not because of political revolutionary convictions alone (for some were non-political), but to find through group activity some measure of human contact that was apparently missing in their lives. Indeed, groups in the early and late sixties became a mass phenomenon [...] The 'group' had become an emblem and focal point for revolt, dissent, and revolution. Various new theatres envisioned a unity between the group, theatre, and revolution. And for them, this trinity became a means to detach themselves from the establishment. For others, who were neither politically or socially oriented, the group was not only a commitment to art, but an act of faith – a commitment to life. (1974: xviii-xix)

Croyden was not dismissive of the group phenomenon, as her own deep interest in Jerzy Grotowski's Teatra Laboratorium in Poland at this time demonstrates. Yet the difficulty with such an interpretation is that it leaves the 'mass phenomenon' as merely that, a phenomenon, implying intergenerational alienation as the primary cause without examining the inherent contradictions of such a move, nested as it was within an otherwise individualistic ideological structure. Similarly, an urge to be collaborative and egalitarian might well produce communes, cooperative groups, or collectives, but precisely what types of communes, cooperative groups, or collectives? Croyden does not address formally the actual structures of American radical theatre groups in her elaboration of their styles of theatre.

Furthermore, although most of the aforementioned authors make mention of, and in some cases devote substantial space to, the three groups selected here, only Schechner and Shank dwell in detail upon the problematics of working as, and being, a group. Schechner's *Environmental Theater*, contains a chapter devoted to 'Groups' (Schechner, 1973: 243-84), in which he wrestles with the relationships between leader, members, and audience. Indeed, the book as a whole often seems like a meditation upon the group experience. (I refer in detail to this text in the chapter on the Performance Group.) Shank (1982: 59-74) describes the change in group structure of the San Francisco Mime Troupe in 1969-70, when the group's founder left, arguing that it became a collective only at this point. (I examine this claim in the chapter on the San Francisco Mime Troupe.) Arthur Sainer's *The Radical Theatre Notebook*, first published in 1975, limns the group phenomenon in a chapter entitled Ensemble Beginnings:

The sixties saw the slow development, then proliferation, of the ensemble. The disenchantment with commercial theatre paralleled a broader disenchantment with the culture at large, with America as a world power, with material well-being, with the ethic of the isolated figure laboring to merit the approval of society.

The case is overstated – it's likely that some went into ensembles for the comforts of belonging; some perhaps smelled the advantages of a company thing – but a significant number who were also disaffected with the myth of success and with the United States as infantile if global thug

discovered that the ensemble not only allowed for a serious critique of the culture, but also for sustained, therefore serious, work; and further, that the ensemble tended to make irrelevant the problem of individual glory. (1997: 17)

Sainer implies an intuitive gravitation towards the non-individualistic in the 1960s rather than structured, systematic choices based on particular 'paradigms', or organising philosophies and outlooks regarding ensemble work. And although he acknowledges that work, rather than mere indulgent escapism, was a genuine consideration, he does not deal with the tension between group work and a background culture in which the individual remained sacrosanct despite a widespread countercultural interest in the group mode of living and working.

In a similar vein, several authors and radical theatre group participants themselves, notably members of the Living Theatre, have used the term 'collective creation' to describe what took place in radical theatre groups in the 1960s. Yet it is not immediately clear that this denotes a particular approach or a particular political position. It seems instead to refer loosely to group-created work. Weinberg (1992), in his study of the collective working processes of what he terms 'people's theatres', argues that there are several reasons for this lack of clarity as to precisely what types of structures are deployed in group-created theatre work. Firstly, there is a tendency to assume that they simply don't work as collective entities, partly because many studies of groups have relied upon Freudian psychology, which reduces a group to the sum of the psychological drives of individuals, as if the participants are only there to transact for individual profit. Secondly, he suggests that the 1960s were partly to blame, since much of what took place in radical theatres in America in the 1960s is perhaps best regarded as 'communal' creation, where the goal of being a family or primary group was as important as task work:

There was confusion between the communal and the collective at this time, as well as many attempts to establish groups with nebulous goals and with organizations that were described in terms of *familial* rather than *functional* reference. The concern of many individuals at the time was to replace repressive hierarchies with free-flowing, patternless, *primary* groups, whose significance was more emotional than purposeful. Theatre collectives, as well as those that run a wide variety of business and service organizations, are seen by their members as *task* groups, characterized by clarity of definition and specificity of purpose. (Weinberg, 1992: 7)

Although Weinberg acknowledges that present theatre collectives do not, or cannot entirely, eschew familial relationships as part of being a collective, he argues that the spectre of the family has contaminated analysis of theatre collectives since this becomes the sole focus of study; other 'regularized patterns', as Weinberg terms them, or the actual dynamics of collectives, are ignored. This unwillingness to study the groups in a more phenomenological or open-minded manner is reinforced by their consignment to an anti-establishment position outside society and the fact that they have not had time themselves to analyse their own working methods. There is thus a critical lacuna in the present day.

While Weinberg's analysis of the skewed nature of how radical theatre groups tend to be viewed seems to me correct it does not necessarily follow that all psychology-based models of group function are irrelevant

or that neo-Freudian perspectives have nothing to contribute to our understanding of radical theatre groups. I will argue that a Klein-influenced neo-Freudian paradigm of the group experience is in fact a helpful tool in explaining how radical theatre groups have functioned in the past, without suggesting that this is how groups must always function.

At the same time, it is important to guard against over-compensation for an aversion to the determinism of Freudian psychoanalysis and the patriarchal family as the main frame of reference for analysing group dynamics. For example, it is apparent to me that I myself have imbibed some of the ultrademocratic ethos of the 1960s even though, strictly speaking, I am not of that period.<sup>2</sup> Quite frequently in the research for this thesis I have had to combat a tendency to regard with inherent suspicion the contributions of the leader or founder figures of the groups studied. I have tended to assume that any self-appointed leaders or founders have some kind of hidden agenda for domination of the group. I have had to struggle with this conditioned response in my research approach so that I can examine the contributions of the leaders of these groups without a sense of betrayal to the other members.<sup>3</sup>

Complicating this personal anti-authoritarianism as a researcher is my own development as a young adult, which took place during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This was a period marked by a 'punk rock' sub-culture, one in which I was fully immersed. This sub-culture was largely antithetical to the collectivist values of the 1960s (hence the term sub-culture rather than counterculture) and the 'Never Trust a Hippie' principle, reflecting a deep scepticism about the 1960s experience, has never been completely dislodged from my own world-view despite my subsequent maturation process. My view of the 1960s has thus been one of ambivalence, and this includes beliefs about the power of the group versus the individual.

There is also the implicit individualist framing associated with academic study: I assume that I can and should study any phenomenon as an individual researcher. Indeed, by conventional academic standards, if I do not clearly frame and justify my work as an individual original contribution to knowledge, I will not be entitled to the qualification that I seek. I also frame the study in individualistic terms. Instead of studying 'The Idea(l) of the individual in radical theatre groups of the 1960s' I assume instead that the problematic entity is the group. While conceptually it would be possible to frame a study in non-individualistic terms, even to the extent of studying within a group setting, producing a collective thesis as an end-product, this would not resolve a fundamental positional fact. In Western society, at least, I have to live with a pre-disposition towards individual agency.

To this extent I think that the fundamental epistemological intellectual position in the West has not changed radically since Marx and others proposed that capitalist society is predicated upon an individualist

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<sup>2</sup> I was born in 1959.

<sup>3</sup> This, for some, has become a matter of methodological principle. For a categorical rejection of the individual founder as a legitimate source of information in a theatre group see Broyles-González (1994) and her study of *El Teatro Campesino*.

ontology. This is not to say that it cannot be interrogated, or that it has remained completely intact since the rise of industrial society. However, it is to say that it cannot be denied as a fundamental substrate in a Western world-view. In the 1960s, the contradictions of this world-view were at least made more visible, and for me it is important to attempt to understand better the tensions that existed rather than simply write them off as a failed experiment in collectivism, where the communal and the collective were unwittingly confused.

Beyond my general concern with the position of the individual in relation to groups, or, indeed, to society, my interest in an apparent conflation of task with social-emotional activity in theatre groups in the 1960s has been fuelled by my own experience in an experimental theatre group in the mid-1980s. Without embracing, or being required to embrace, a clearly demarcated politic or ideology of collectivity, the philosophy of the group was for the most part anti-individualistic. Organisational principles were more implicit than explicit. The star actor concept was banished. Instead, while auditions were held for certain productions, acting and production roles tended to be assigned according to the perceived abilities of members for a given production. Group members often had dual on-stage and back-stage responsibilities (e.g., you could expect to have both acting and sound design roles). Group research, discussion, and collaboration on text adaptation and/or the creation of stage movements were customary practices. The financial returns from shows were divided as equally as possible.

To this extent the group appeared to function as a collective. However, where a production had an individual directorial figure, as it almost always did, the director frequently became the object of suspicion. Was the director a visionary or a manipulator? What was the authority of the director? Did we need a director at all? Furthermore, there were times when the emotional lives of one or more members of the group seemed to obtrude uncomfortably on the work that we were ostensibly trying to execute. Were we a novel alternative family, a family substitute, or just coming together to act out our individual rites of passage? Either way, much more was invested than the mere collaborative labour required to rehearse, build sets, promote shows and perform on stage.

On a more personal level, I have found the research process has forced me to reassess my own politics, or more accurately, to reassess my own dissociation from a recognisable political ideology. This is to some degree understandable, because academic inquiry typically affects objectivity and purity of method, encouraging one to construct 'depoliticised' narratives. I have therefore had to guard against looking too enthusiastically for social and historical influences at the expense of political dimensions. Furthermore, and as noted earlier, my formative years as a young adult were characterised by a punk rock philosophy that was opposed to any sort of structural explanation of society or belief in a coherent political ideology.

Such an admission seems to validate the characterisation, noted by Daniel Bell and others, of the politics of the post-WWII period in Western societies as pluralistic, where the end, as in termination, of any kind of uniform ideology has been achieved. The ideology is that there is no ideology. For example, an attraction for small group interaction, and certain forms of group therapy, can be seen as a symptom of acquiescence to this non-ideology in post-industrial societies. If politics is at an end 'officially', then the only recourse for urges for political engagement is to get into small groups and work at something else such as self-realisation, serious task work or escapist leisure. The fact that a repressed politics almost always returns, albeit usually in the guise of a type of Freudian family drama, is of no great consequence. It is something to be deflected and re-sublimated, where possible, by participants. While I do not agree with this assessment, as I believe that distinctive political ideologies have changed appearance rather than evaporated in the post-war period, I have had to resist the appeal of post-ideological argumentation as consciously as possible.

### Methodology

As noted earlier, the three radical theatre groups I have selected for study are the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group. I examine the ways in which the three radical theatre groups functioned and were constructed, both on and off stage, within a climate of ultrademocracy, with its attendant suspicions towards individual leadership and authorship. To do this, I do not use conventional dramatic or performance theories. My use of the term 'dramaturgical analysis' reflects a social science approach to the subject matter. Dramaturgical analysis is a recognised sociological concept, associated principally with Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman. Therefore I do not analyse the stage dramaturgy of plays in as much depth as some might expect. My belief is that an interdisciplinary, rather than disciplinary, study is required to address this topic and I rely heavily on group theory as it has been framed in the field of psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

More specifically, I draw upon the theory of the 'basic assumption' group associated with psychologist W.R. Bion, Goffman's 'theatrical frame' and the presentation of self, and anthropologist Victor Turner's discussion of the liminal, the liminoid, and his aforementioned typology of *communitas* in order to construct group paradigms or typologies. I also consider political philosophies that endorse the group ideal under the rubric of the 'collective', such as anarchism and communism, along with other countercultural influences upon group formations in the 1960s.

Furthermore, I have approached the radical theatres in terms of three background questions:

- How did the group organise itself off-stage? This includes consideration of where the group was housed, the size of the group, the demographics of the group, how the group financed its activities, the kinds of living arrangements practised in the group, the conditions under which the group rehearsed, whether the group travelled frequently, and how people responded to the group in off-stage settings.
- How was the group idea(l) performed on stage? How did the group create the works to be staged? How did the group use space in performance? How did the group represent itself as a group on stage? How did the group construct the audience as a group?
- How was the group constructed in terms of what participants said or wrote about the group idea(l)? What were the politics of the group? To what sources did group members refer regarding the ideas and practices of the group? What conflicts, if any, were there between differing ideas and ideals within a group and/or between the articulation of ideas and their enactment on stage? What did others say or write about the group in regard to its expressed idea(l)s as compared to its practices on stage?

Principal emphasis in this thesis is given to the first and the last questions. The dramaturgy of stage performances by the groups is already relatively well-known. The three groups selected all evoke images of ensemble presentation, albeit in differing forms. Each group attempted to divert audience attention away from individual star-actor attributes. Individuals, where they did appear as individuals, were to be taken by the audience as ciphers of varying levels of collectivity. Formations were created on stage that suggested mass entities, whether angry crowds, the state, the world machine, or some kind of devouring and/or nurturing larger organism.

In terms of available sources, several discourses on the three groups have been generated, particularly histories of staged performances. Reviews of particular productions are plentiful. Archival materials on these groups are extensive. I do not rehearse the production histories of the groups in great detail unless I believe it speaks to the group paradigm, or general outlook of the group, and in many cases my activity is primarily one of reinterpretation of what has already been said. I have not generated primary data such as interviews or questionnaires. This, of course, has drawbacks, since it appears to give uncritical standing to those already in a position to narrate and construct history. Conscious of this, I have assembled participant listings, from a number of sources, for each of the groups in order to reinstate, in a minor way, some of the identities of those involved in the groups, particularly some of those not cited in the text of the thesis. (See Appendix A 'Membership of the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group prior to 1970')

I have also included, as Appendix B, a broader chronology of 'Political, theatrical, and countercultural events of the 1950s and 1960s', which is designed as an aid to Chapter Three, the chapter that contextualises the groups in terms of important background influences of the period. For example, one can read the Happenings of the early 1960s created by both the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, as reflections of the wider penchant for Happenings in America and Europe at the time. This is significant insofar as, in general, Happenings tended to de-centre individualised performance, creating challenges for the assignment of performer identity and for delineating the boundaries of performance: Who is performing? Is the performance only intelligible as a collective and unruly interaction? Similarly, the signs of increasing attraction towards leaderless group organisation within the three groups, reaching its apogee around 1969, coincides with the apparent explosion in the numbers of communes in America. This includes the severely distorted communality of the Manson family and the marginally less deformed communal cells of the Weather Underground. Some of the performance choices of the three theatre groups thus need to be viewed in light of prevailing trends within the arts and within the countercultural politics of the period.

Because they assist in addressing, at least in summary form, the first of the three key questions outlined above, I have also constructed a set of chronological tables which chart performance histories, including rehearsal periods and geographic movements, for the three theatre groups (Appendices C-F for the Living Theatre, G-H for the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and I for the Performance Group). To these tables I have added events which, in my view, are likely to have had an influence upon group functioning.<sup>4</sup> Presenting information in this form allows for a relatively rapid apprehension, especially for those unfamiliar with the particular groups, of some of the key points of similarity (e.g., the trend from adaptation of existing authored works to self-written material, and the dependence upon the American college 'circuit' for venues and sponsorship). More importantly, the differences between the groups quickly become evident. The dizzying list of very short-season Living Theatre performances, throughout Europe, with little down-time for rehearsal, stands in stark contrast to the Performance Group, which seems almost to invert this rehearsal-to-performance ratio. Similarly, the clear importance attached to having a permanent home base from which to work, both in the case of the Performance Group and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, despite the latter's open-air reputation, contrasts very strongly with the post-1964 Living Theatre.

Having placed so much emphasis on the particular epoch known as the 1960s, I should point out that I do not view the decade as a completely isolated phenomenon, as if what was experienced by radical theatre groups relates only to that period in history. Indeed, most discourses about the 1960s carry some kind of caveat about when the decade effectively began or ended. One could argue, for instance, that the launch of Sputnik in 1957 and the fall of Saigon in 1973 or the resignation of Richard Nixon in 1974 provide

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<sup>4</sup> These tables, with the exception of the chronology for the Performance Group, have been vetted by original group members or by a recognised archive keeper.

meaningful brackets for the American sixties. Similarly, the Beatles' invasion of America, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Woodstock, Altamont, the 'oil-crisis', and other events can be cited as boundary markers for the decade. My analysis, following Bigsby (1985: 20-26), and Sainer (1975: 11-12), uses 1959 as a starting point. Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double* (1958) had been radicalising American alternative theatre for some months, Joe Cino's *Caffe Cino* had recently opened, announcing the arrival of Off-Off-Broadway, Gelber's *The Connection* was debuted by the Living Theatre that year, the San Francisco Mime Troupe was founded that year, as was Grotowski's Theatre of Thirteen Rows, and Allan Kaprow coined the term Happening at this point. I use 1970 as an endpoint, principally because the theatre groups chosen for study experienced signal events in that year, marking the end of a particular phase of existence for each. However, irrespective of the particular bracketing years I have chosen for the somewhat slippery epoch known as the 1960s, my epistemological standpoint is dialectical, insofar as I regard 1960s theatres to be critically engaged, even if not consciously, with earlier (and later) developments in theatre, just as, in a broader sense, I regard the 1960s as inseparable from earlier and later decades.

With respect to the degree to which the three groups I have selected for study adequately represent the full sweep of radical theatres in America in the 1960s, this is a subjective choice, although all three have been frequently studied over several decades. My clustering of the three groups is a minor departure from tradition. It is more common to find the San Francisco Mime Troupe discussed alongside groups such as the Bread and Puppet Theatre and El Teatro Campesino. Similarly, one often finds the Living Theatre and the Performance Group bracketed with the Open Theatre, especially in doctoral theses (Papin, 1985 is an exception in studying all six groups). In essence, the assumption, even if it is not often conclusively argued, is that the first trio are radical 'political' theatres (the political utterances of the Living Theatre notwithstanding), whilst the latter three are radical 'formalists' - aesthetics and technique take precedence over a recognisable political position. The importance of such a bifurcation diminishes, in my view, when considering the general proposition of ultrademocracy.

One of the crucial points of convergence is the fact that each group was founded by a charismatic individual or individuals, and these individuals had misgivings, to varying degrees, about their roles as leaders. This 'guru' element to the founding of the groups may be seen as stacking the analytical deck against groups less dominated by particular individuals. And yet few groups in this decade appear to have been formed without the impetus of senior figures (the 1970s may have been markedly different in this respect). Also, given what actually took place internally within the three groups as the decade closed, in spite of any manipulative tendencies on the part of the original leaders, these groups seem relatively reliable indicators of what would have taken place across countless radical theatre groups in America in the 1960s.



For those interested in the larger pool of American radical theatres in the 1960s it is possible to name at least thirty groups, although as Weinberg and others have observed, the histories of many more radical theatre groups remain very obscure. Sainer (1997: 17-40) lists the most notable groups in his view (New York-based unless otherwise stated): the Bread and Puppet Theatre (later Vermont); El Teatro Campesino (Delano, California); the Firehouse Theatre (Minneapolis, later San Francisco); the Living Theatre; the OM-Theatre Workshop (Boston); the Open Theatre; the Pageant Players; the New Orleans Group; the Performance Group; and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. He also notes the following: Theatre for the Burning City; Stomach-ache Theatre; It's All Right to Be a Woman Theatre; the East Bay Sharks; the Moving Men; and the Ontrabanda Company. To this list, using Durham (1989), can be added the Free Southern Theater of New Orleans, Hull-House Theatre (Chicago); Mabou Mines (the group formed in 1969), the Paper Bag Players, and the Theatre of the Living Arts, associated with Andre Gregory (Philadelphia). A Radical Theatre Festival organised in 1968 by R.G. Davis of the San Francisco Mime Troupe attracted the Concept, Theater Black, and the Black Troupe amongst some of those already mentioned (Edelson, 1975: 32). Weisman's *Guerrilla Theater: Scenarios for Revolution* (1973), in addition to consideration of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, profiles the following groups: the Caravan Theater (Boston); the Street Player's Union (Boston); Ed Boreal's' Bodacious Buggerilla Theater (Los Angeles); Soul and Latin Theater (New York); City Street Theater (New York). Weinberg (1992) mentions the Berkeley Radical Arts Group (42) and the Company (45). Evidence of other, more transient groups, can be found in reproduced broadsheets and flyers in Goodman (1970) e.g., American Playground (397-400), the Pitschel Players (386), and Gut Theater, and the Sixth Street Theatre (387-8). Many of these theatres would have regarded themselves as collectives. My assumption remains, however, that communalism would have elided into collectivism in most, if not all, of these groups as well. Furthermore, even in situations where a group was founded without the involvement of a guru-like figure, I believe that leadership would have become a critical and problematic issue.

Having claimed that the three groups can function as good general indicators, I must add that my choice of group has been partially influenced by an interest in searching for similarities and differences on what might be described as ecological grounds. I have deliberately chosen to compare a more or less fixed-habitat, New York-based stationary theatre group (the Performance Group) with one that was, and is, nomadic and trans-national, despite its New York beginnings (the Living Theatre), together with one that moved, and moves, mainly within the San Francisco Bay Area ecosystem, both indoors and in the open air (the San Francisco Mime Troupe).

Before outlining the overall structure of the thesis and embarking upon the building of a group paradigm from group theories against which to benchmark the three groups, I will give brief introductory profiles of the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group, together with indications as to the politics of group experience that each group embraced.

### The Living Theatre

The Living Theatre was founded in 1946 by Julian Beck and Judith Malina. Although it cut its teeth as an Off-Broadway theatre in the 1950s and early 1960s, it is most commonly identified as a phenomenon of the late 1960s, particularly as the quintessential hippie theatre tribe, one that assailed Europe and America with sprawling, three-hour-long, group-created productions involving nudity, Eastern mysticism, and a large measure of audience harassment. Some of these perceptions are accurate. The Living Theatre clearly adhered to a type of non-pastoral nomadic existence in the 1960s, actively cultivating the image of a kinship group of itinerant travelling players in the various interviews, profiles, and books that were written during these years. Yet it was also a group dedicated to theatrical work.

The political and aesthetic philosophy of the group was a kind of pacifist anarchism, consistent with Paul Goodman's anarchist views, and much of the stage material reflected this philosophy. As a group of people the Living Theatre operated as a commune; children and significant others always travelled with the group. Life in the Living Theatre was often a hand-to-mouth existence, and members of the company appeared reconciled to an uncertain pattern of movement. One or two-night stands in towns and cities all over Europe were the norm, punctuated by longer engagements in bigger cities, and the occasional theatre festival. A few short-term residencies in places such as Heist-sur-Mer on the Belgian Coast, Berlin's Spandau Prison, and Céfalu on the coast of Sicily, allowed performances to be suspended while new works were created as a group.

The high points of the group's life in the 1960s, on many accounts, came in 1968: firstly in France, and then in America. One of the most celebrated images of the group is that of 'Le Living' at the centre of the student occupation of the Odéon in Paris in May 1968. The group was also fêted for its boycott of the Avignon Theatre Festival only a few weeks later. A tour of America in the winter of 1968 caused much controversy in the media. At the centre of these events was a work called *Paradise Now*, which was created collectively by the group in the first half of 1968 and which in some respects embodied the total philosophy of the Living Theatre. The play was a map for, or guide to, the 'beautiful anarchist non-violent revolution', as Beck and Malina frequently described the Living Theatre's overall project, and it involved a great deal of audience participation. Critics often loathed the work. Jim Morrison, lead singer of rock group The Doors, was captivated by it, commuting between Los Angeles and San Francisco to see the Californian performances, personally bankrolling the group's return to New York, and parlaying the spirit of the show into his next stage performance with The Doors, which got him arrested. Young Americans responded to *Paradise Now* with intensity, whether they were embracing or rejecting it.

The self-promoted tribal ethos of the Living Theatre has been used both to condemn and to immortalise it, and no doubt some of the response would have depended upon one's actual experience of their

performances. In America at least, the Living Theatre infuriated a number of potentially sympathetic reviewers, political activists, and fellow theatre workers with what appeared to be a style of theatre that was at once bombastic, incoherent, obscure, self-indulgent, and, worst of all for theatre critics, 'amateur'. Frequently seen as patronising, if not downright arrogant, the Living Theatre could, it seems, say too much and mean too little, particularly when shouting political and emancipatory slogans to their already liberated or engaged contemporaries.

Conversely, for some, the loyalty to Artaud, the anti-bourgeois contempt for 'good theatre', and the underlying anti-authoritarian anarchism of the Living Theatre in the 1960s marks it out as a significant theatrical and/or cultural phenomenon. It was quite sufficient that the Living Theatre was breaking the rules of theatre and society, attempting to engender its vision of a rule-free, anarchic, communalism in its stead. Whether or not the Living Theatre created professional work hardly mattered. What mattered was the fact that the Living Theatre was prepared to take serious risks in the theatre in order to make a better society.

The numerous commentaries on the Living Theatre notwithstanding, an analytical haze still hangs over the classic Living Theatre of the 1960s, their appearance, extravagant behaviour, and their own dissembling remarks concerning their anarchist-pacifist structure perhaps deflecting comment away from concentrated scrutiny. In some views the Living Theatre was a serious political theatre in the 1960s. Others viewed the Living Theatre as a collection of self-indulgent hedonists. I will argue that the politics and philosophy of the group, a mixture of individualist anarchism, humanism, utopianism, R.D. Laing, and Artaud, both anticipated and embodied the ultrademocratic temper of the times. It was one that attempted to balance individualist and collectivist urges in equal measure, producing results that were simultaneously self-indulgent and communally-oriented, but not altogether irrelevant. Furthermore, although the founders of the group themselves campaigned loudly for the 'withering away' of the director, this never actually took place. Beck and Malina, who wanted a theatre as much as a new anarchist social order, merely adapted to the conditions of antipathy towards leadership figures.

### **The San Francisco Mime Troupe**

The San Francisco Mime Troupe was founded in 1959 by R.G. Davis. Its motto, 'Engagement, commitment and fresh air', was coined in 1963, and for many, the Mime Troupe immediately connotes an image of open air performances in the *Commedia dell'Arte* style (although the main style became melodrama mixed with satire from 1970), with makeshift sets and stages hastily erected in the public parks in and around San Francisco's Bay Area. Although the group's name suggests silent mimed performances, from the outset the Troupe used speech and song in its work. Later, printed text and slogans were incorporated, reflecting the influence of Brecht and agitprop techniques.

Indeed, while other groups have laid claim to the term, the concept of 'guerrilla theatre' was first developed by members San Francisco Mime Troupe, taking some of the elements of earlier 'agitprop', but making the propaganda or information more portable and relevant to the immediate community context. For example, rather than lecture the audience on class war or stir up sentiment, performers demonstrated ways in which parking meters could be jammed by aluminium tabs from drink cans and how telephone companies could be 'ripped off' in reply to their extortionate call charges. Through all of this, Brecht's views concerning the role of the actor were highly influential. Actors were meant to teach and entertain the audience, but not to show off, or get caught up in developing a character as a psychologically deep personality.

The Mime Troupe's climatically sensitive approach in the 1960s and 1970s was to play Bay Area parks from late spring to early autumn, followed by college tours nationwide during the winter months, the latter providing the most secure source of annual income. During the late 1960s and early 1970s the touring season included a month-long sojourn in New York in alternate years. Both for philosophical reasons, and because of difficulties in accessing public funding in the 1960s, the Mime Troupe practised the tradition of passing the hat for donations from the audience at its performances in public spaces.

The studios occupied by the Mime Troupe in the 1960s were always in working-class areas, and premises were often shared with organisations aligned with the New Left, such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the San Francisco Newsreel. The Mime Troupe was closely associated with the countercultural vanguard, or 'the Movement' as it was known, supporting the campaigns of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, anti-Vietnam demonstrations, the Black Panthers, the women's movement, and the rights of ethnic communities that lacked adequate representation in local government. To this extent, and to the extent that the group saw its work and the structure of American society in fundamentally Marxist terms from the early 1960s, it sought to embed itself within a class context, and to advocate the overthrow of capitalism in America, even though most of its membership was from the white middle class.

At the same time the San Francisco Mime Troupe was closely connected with the Haight-Ashbury psychedelic scene of 1965-68. During the Summer of Love, from late 1966 to mid-1967, the Mime Troupe featured in many of the key events, including the Death of Money Birth of the Haight parade in December 1966. The group regularly rubbed shoulders with and received the support of rock bands and Beat generation poets and writers. It often participated in countercultural events alongside luminaries such as Timothy Leary and Ken Kesey. In late 1966 some of the core members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe formed the nucleus of the San Francisco Diggers, a group whose main objectives were to make people aware that everyone is a 'life-actor', free to do his or her 'own thing' (arguably coining this catchphrase for the first time), and to promote the principle of free, moneyless, institutions. The Diggers, for a time at least, were seen as the hippie equivalent of the Salvation Army.

Thus, while the San Francisco Mime Troupe was not simply anti-individualistic, and took seriously the revolutionary philosophies of collectivity as espoused by Marx, Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro, Ché Guevara and others, it was also situated right at the centre of the counterculture, which fully embraced the idea of the communal and indeed the commune, without necessarily imbibing a philosophy of the collective. The radical socialist and communist politics of the group did not, I will argue, provide immunity from the background of ultrademocracy that outlawed individual leadership without limiting rights to individual self-expression. Furthermore, I will argue that the apparent transformation of the Mime Troupe from dictatorship to leaderless collective with the departure of R.G. Davis in 1970 is less straightforward than is often claimed.

### **The Performance Group**

The genesis of the Performance Group, in part at least, lies in a workshop at New York University in October 1967, organised by Richard Schechner, which brought Jerzy Grotowski and Richard Cieslak, both from the Polish Laboratory Theatre, as it was known in English (actually the Teatr Laboratorium), to America for the first time. In some respects the Performance Group, founded by Schechner in November of that year, was intended as the American incarnation of Grotowski's theatrical explorations. In keeping with Grotowski's approach, the Performance Group used canonical texts as a starting point for a script. Great emphasis was placed upon physical exercises, long rehearsal periods, and cloistered rehearsal work in a dedicated performance space. In contrast to Grotowski, the Performance Group used the performance space not just to hurl performers nakedly at the text, but also at each other as naked psychological entities, thereby making the theatre a therapeutic site for the performers, and, it was hoped, for the audience.

Although the group staged only three major productions during the period 1967-71, the results always created strong impressions. Plays were typically crafted and recrafted over the course of runs that sometimes lasted more than a year. In a pattern similar to the Group Theatre of the 1930s, a major part of the rehearsal period was often conducted away from New York, in residency at a New England college, for example. The group also practised a gradual unveiling of work-in-progress through open rehearsals (admission \$1.50 by donation) as the production came closer to opening night.

One of the things that it became most notable for was the full exploration of the performance environment. Rather than renovate an existing theatre, or convert a loft or church in the customary Off-Off-Broadway style, the group chose an even more neutral or empty space, a former metal stamping factory (christened the 'Performing Garage' because it housed a refuse truck at the time it was first viewed by the group) in which to establish a rehearsing and performing home. Through the work of designers such as Paul Epstein the performance space and the positioning of the audience were reconfigured from one production to the

next. This reflected both Grotowski's views on the sacred and scientific aspects of the theatrical event, and the philosophy of redefinition of performance space sought earlier by artists who created Happenings and environments in unconventional settings. Audiences had to adjust to the prospect of being deliberately distributed throughout the performance space, sometimes being moved from one place to another during the course of the evening. They were herded into small groups or clusters, made or encouraged to climb scaffolding to take up their spectators' positions, and otherwise included in the action.

In terms of the politics of the Performance Group, and in contrast to the overt anarchist politics of the Living Theatre, or the socialist politics of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, there was no clear association with a particular political ideology or philosophy. It was perhaps more a hybrid of two influences. Firstly, there was the politics of individual experience as advocated by R.D. Laing and Gestalt therapists such as Fritz Perls, hence an interest in the group as therapeutic entity. Secondly, there was a pre-industrial politics of the group experience, based on the classical Athenian polis and rituals in other cultures much celebrated and reported in the work of cultural anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Claude Levi Strauss.

In practical terms, one could argue that Schechner pursued a pragmatic form of utilitarian socialism. He garnered whatever resources he could from outside in order to support and maintain the group and its members. Fundamentally, however, I will argue that Freud held higher status than Marx in the politics of the Performance Group, keeping it more firmly aligned with an individualist philosophy. Even so, and like the other two theatres, which were founded by individuals, not by committees or collectives, the Performance Group had to operate within a climate of leaderless ultrademocracy during the latter part of the 1960s. Maintaining control over leadership was as much an issue in the Performance Group as it was in the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Schechner, one could argue, was more up front about it and worried about it more openly than most, as his performance writings consistently show.

### **Thesis structure**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter Two lays the theoretical foundations for the study of the three radical theatre groups in subsequent chapters. This chapter deals principally with micro-theories of the group or perspectives on group life, particularly Bion's 'basic assumption' group, Goffman's 'self presentation' and 'frame-breaking' activities, and the liminality, liminoid, and star group constructs of Victor Turner. I put forward a number of group paradigms based on these and other constructs for subsequent comparison with the three theatre groups.

In Chapter Three I consider the background politics of the 1960s, including anarchism and New Left philosophies, and other facets of the counterculture that are likely to have impinged upon any general group

formations of the time. Countercultural group typologies are put forward to supplement those derived in Chapter Two.

Chapter Four analyses the group dramaturgy of the Living Theatre from 1947 to 1970. Comments about group life and group ideals in the Living Theatre in the 1960s, including those relating to philosophies of anarchism, made by insiders and outsiders alike, are discussed. Special attention is given to key productions such as *The Connection* (1959), *The Brig* (1963), *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* (1964), *Frankenstein* (1965), *Antigone* (1967), and *Paradise Now* (1968). The group's dissolution and reconfiguration during the latter part of 1969 and the beginning of 1970 is discussed.

Chapter Five outlines the development as a group of the San Francisco Mime Troupe during the period 1959 to 1970, beginning with a brief sketch of the pre-Mime Troupe career of founder R.G. Davis. Commentaries on both the working methods and the New Left politics of the Mime Troupe, particularly as relayed by R.G. Davis in his history of the group, published in 1975, are examined. Three productions, *The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* (1965), *L'Amant Militaire* (1967), and *Congress of the Whitewashers* (1969) are discussed, as are the circumstances that led to the departure of Davis and other members at the start of 1970.

Chapter Six begins with an outline of Richard Schechner's involvement in radical theatre prior to his founding of the Performance Group in 1967. The day-to-day workings of the group from 1967 to 1970, are discussed. The group's most famous work of the 1960s, *Dionysus in 69* (1968), and the group-created *Commune* (1970-71), are examined. However, greatest attention is given to the group's confrontation with Shakespeare in *Makbeth* (1969), which coincided with a period of conflict and crisis within the group, and which resulted in the reconstitution of the Performance Group by Schechner in 1970.

Chapter Seven comprises comparative discussion of the information derived from the preceding chapters, particularly in relation to the group paradigms outlined in Chapter Two, but also in relation to other factors. Contrasts between the three groups are considered. I conclude with consideration of the legacies of radical theatre groups of the 1960s, asking whether there are useful insights for groups of the present day seeking to work under non-hierarchical collaborative principles.

## Chapter Two

### Theories of Groups

#### Introduction

This chapter examines a number of conventional psychological and micro-social conceptions of small groups, particularly those that stress the process or existential aspects of groups. It is argued that the general group paradigm for the 1960s, insofar as a single model can be posited, differs markedly from a latter-day conception of a group and how we manage, or participate in, such entities. In the present day, groups are seen as either predominantly task-oriented, or predominantly affect-oriented, or, if a group is intended, ideally, to be both of these types in equal measure, then it can be carefully managed as such. We are less inclined to run groups as open-ended social experiments and routinely approach them armed with ground-rules and contracts. Groups of the 1960s, on the other hand, typically embraced a deliberate, but relatively unmanaged, philosophy of the group as both a social bonding site and a place to do work, with an emphasis on removing distinctions between public and private life. Experimentation and rule-breaking were often goals in themselves.

In order to better explore this distinction particular emphasis is placed upon the 'basic assumption group', a model of group function developed in the middle decades of the twentieth century by psychologist W. R. Bion, primarily as a result of his observations of groups in clinical settings. Bion's group model, which he and others have argued, applies, in varying degrees, to all group settings, acts as a group idea, and provides an analogue for groups of the 1960s to the extent that the group was often unconsciously regarded as a site of great uncertainty, if not direct threat, for the individuals participating in the group. Bion's basic assumption group is also relevant in its explicit problematisation of the role of the leader, reflecting a characteristic of the radical egalitarianism of the 1960s. In both the basic assumption group and radical groups of the 1960s leadership by an individual is invariably met with great ambivalence.

The 'dramaturgical', or 'theatrical frame', for reading the individual's experience of events in everyday life, a concept associated with sociologist Erving Goffman, is also examined in order to explain the more conscious ideals of groups in the 1960s. There was a widespread belief that, in principle, everyday life should not be like a conventional theatre of roles and masks. The denial of any need, or legitimate ground, for distinctions between a public and private self, the rejection of performing daily life other than as one's true self, contributes to an understanding of why groups of the 1960s tended to be so highly affect-oriented: groups deliberately, rather than inadvertently, sought to blur the distinctions between work and group bonding activities.



Added to this, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's 'commitment maintenance' framework and anthropologist Victor Turner's concepts of liminality, the liminoid, star groups, and *communitas* are used to explain how the group was further idealised in the 1960s. Groups in the 1960s regarded the historical moment as unprecedented. New and radically transgressive rites of passage were being created it was believed, rites that could not simply be tolerated and ignored as youthful 'time out' from mainstream society. There promised to be a new social order, one that did not have to obey the existing rules of an oppressive capitalist, racist and patriarchal society.

In examining the sources described above it is important to note that while they rarely, if ever, discuss such specific group formations as radical theatres of the 1960s in any depth, there are, however, some personal associations to theatre for at least three of the authors mentioned. W. R. Bion, as a privately practising psychoanalyst, treated playwright Samuel Beckett as an individual patient from 1934-35<sup>1</sup>. Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974) draws heavily upon contemporary theatre reviews (he uses a review of the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* for example). Perhaps of greatest significance, Victor Turner's anthropological studies oscillate between ethnographic work in tribal societies (e.g. Central African Ndembu village rituals) and explorations of Western secular performance genres. Indeed, just prior to his death in 1983 he had been a co-collaborator with Richard Schechner at the Performing Garage.<sup>2</sup> Although Turner often uses Western rituals for comparative purposes, the titles of key works such as *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982) and *The Anthropology of Performance* (1986) demonstrate how seriously he takes the notion of performance. Most crucially, for the purpose of this study, his use of the 'liminoid' and his differentiation between types of *communitas* speak directly to group ideals in radical theatres of the 1960s.

### **The study of groups as existential entities and the social psychology of groups**

Use of the term 'social psychology' when discussing groups needs qualification. Hogg and Abrams (1988: 10-13) and Parker (1989) have drawn attention to demarcations between a more individualistic 'psychological social psychology' and a more collectively oriented 'sociological social psychology'. To some extent this reflects the historical dialectic between two social science disciplines. In psychology, typically following Freud, the individual is the primary unit of study, and explanations of behaviour rarely stray beyond the nuclear family. In sociology, following Marx, Durkheim, Cooley, Homans, and numerous others, groups and society create and maintain individual identities. I attempt to maintain a balance between both disciplinary emphases in the present discussion.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bair (1990: 187-8; 211-12).

<sup>2</sup> Turner explicitly acknowledges Schechner's influence in the introduction to *From Ritual to Theatre*: 'In the past five years, I have been directly introduced to the workings of experimental theatre which flourished in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but appears regrettably to be merely sputtering today. Several of the essays in this book relate to Schechner's theories and practice as a producer' (1982: 15). See also (1982: 90-93) where Turner, who borrows freely from Goffman's ideas, notes that Schechner had at the same time invited Goffman to take part in the workshop to which he refers.

A comprehensive definition of a group, encompassing the 'how' and the 'what', is not difficult to find in present psychological and social psychological discourses. Jaques offers the following factors that define a group:

- there is a collective perception of being a group;
- needs and rewards are sought by its members;
- there is interdependence among members;
- there are shared aims or goals;
- there is social organisation of the group in terms of norms, roles, power and emotional relationships;
- members interact with each other face-to-face but are also aware of the group's existence when not together in the same place;
- there is a sense of cohesiveness insofar as members want to contribute to aims and participate in activities; and
- there is a sense of continuous membership. (Jaques, 1991: 13)

Indeed, one can now find a vast array of manuals or handbooks available on 'How to be a group', covering the family, workplace groups, therapeutic groups, psychodrama groups, sociodrama groups, recovery groups and other groups in society that are not solely task-oriented. This is largely a post-1960s phenomenon. Prior to the 1960s, analytical literature on groups tended to fall within areas of professional or academic specialisation. The everyday group experience, unless a person had access to a therapist or was institutionalised in some way, would have been that as found in families, community groups, church groups, clubs, sports groups, political organisations, and other groups with some sort of overt instrumental purpose. During the 1960s the popular conception of what made up a group began to change, as alternatives to both the 'nuclear family' group experience, and to the accepted ancillary social groups of 'square' society, such as those mentioned above, were sought. The button-down world of the post-WWII period and its conservative values were rejected. For many, learning about group life in the 1960s involved a pragmatic process of trial and error. Therefore, while Jaques' soberly formulated, ideal construction of a group, where there is a balance between agreed purposeful activity, social and emotional needs, and an awareness of being a group, is appealing, it does not provide an appropriate benchmark for the experiences of groups in the 1960s.

Jaques' definition does, however, recognise a fundamental philosophical tenet in radical theatre groups of the 1960s: groups are more than aggregations of people performing a particular task or sets of tasks. Groups, for those studying them, at least, possess an ineluctable internal dynamic that ought to be acknowledged and addressed. Some authors have framed this dynamic in terms of a more or less sequential process or life cycle. For example, Tuckman and Jensen (1977: 419-27) regard the life process of a group to be a five-stage one of 'forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning'. Preston (1997: 11fn.)

matches this with a more colloquial formulation: 'groping, griping, grasping, grouping, group action'. Hare (1982), acknowledging both Bales (1950) and W.R. Bion, subdivides Tuckman and Jensen's schema, drawing a distinction between *social-emotional* and *task* behaviour in groups, as if there is always a duality in orientation. In Hare's view, both behaviours move through four stages. In social-emotional terms the sequence is as follows: testing and dependence; intragroup conflict; development of group cohesion, and; functional role-relatedness. In relation to task activity the sequence is thus: orientation and testing; emotional response to task demands; reflecting upon progress or lack of progress as an individual and discussing this matter with other group members, and; emergence of insight (Hare, 1982: 69-70). Hare's formulation reinforces the notion that, ideally, group life is a journey from uncertainty and danger towards co-operation and trust. Groups 'fail', then, when they cannot pass through one of the early stages.

This developmental view resonates with many lay experiences in groups. In its 'infancy' a group will often produce anxious, if not neurotic, responses from its members, but at the outset members will anticipate the overcoming of both social-emotional and task difficulties. Sometimes this is achieved on both levels, sometimes on one, and sometimes neither the social-emotional nor the task 'work' are fulfilled. However, this dramatisation of group life, as if it is a journey fraught with danger, must be treated with caution. As noted in the introductory chapter, if, in Western society, the collective experience is, by definition, following Marx, already estranged, then one would expect the group process to be treated with degrees of trepidation by participants and analysts alike. Far from being seen as normal, it is something for the individual to approach with apprehension. Furthermore, the concepts used to understand the group experience, if the group experience has become alienated, will tend to be drawn from an individualist perspective, since that is how conceptual thinking has been shaped in Western society for several centuries. I will argue that the idea of the group, as used in many groups in the 1960s, was indeed based upon an inherently negative paradigm, partly due to this Western social construction, but also partly due to 'normal' existential anxieties which any human being experiences. Before doing so, other perspectives on the group process from within the field loosely known as group theory need to be considered, especially those that stress the social dimensions of group life.

The general applicability of a developmental model of groups to all groups in society has provoked considerable debate. A few, such as Alford (1994: ix), argue, following both Freud and Bion, that one can categorically assert that small study groups are the microcosms of a general 'state of nature'. Any group, under such reasoning, will show characteristics much like those shown by the schoolboy group in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, where battles for dominance take place, and there is an underlying dread of being singled out as a scapegoat. Others have been more cautious. Argyle (1973: 216-17), for example, cautions that many of the models of group life have been heavily derived from therapeutic or remedial settings, where there is little to suggest that group members are socially or emotionally well adjusted. Even where this is not the case, and interactions between 'normal' people are the object of study, the groups

studied are still artificially constructed or influenced in some way, often by the very act of deliberate investigation. The much-used T-groups, or sensitivity training groups, often associated with the Tavistock Clinic, at which Bion worked, are highly regarded by many because of their relative freedom from rigid structural or procedural impositions. But even these are no exception, since they have a shadow leadership figure, in the form of the clinical expert, who is present in the group as a facilitating guide if not an explicit interpreter. Furthermore, it is often wryly observed that most of the learning groups studied and reported upon tend to be made up of undergraduate psychology college students, rather than cross-sections of a particular society. This has led to attempts to compare, directly, natural small groups with experimental groups (McFeat, 1974), but it still tends to privilege a Western construction of group life.

Perhaps even more problematic when attempting a developmental study of a 'real-life' group is the more open-ended 'life-span' of such groups. For example, in thinking about applications to theatre groups, such as, say, the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, one is confronted with the fact that they have survived as entities over several decades rather than several months or a few years. It might well be possible to detect, under a developmental framework, several repetitions of the basic phases of development within a group over a period of years, and perhaps label them as distinct 'versions' or incarnations of the group, partly in accordance with personnel turnover. It might also be possible to identify periods where a group has stayed in one phase for what seems an inordinate length of time. However, this is a highly reductionist approach, and does not allow for longer-term evolutionary processes, both in terms of the personal lives of group members, and the social and cultural context of the time, which may heavily influence the social-emotional and task expectations and motivations of group members.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, a developmental group perspective appears to require a dualistic view of group life, the researcher attending, on the one hand, to the emotional life of the group, and on the other, investigating the task activities of the group. As noted earlier, in the 1960s, at least, 'the group' as a cultural phenomenon seems to reflect a deliberate, and often emblematic, blending of social-emotional and task activity. This encouraged experiments in 'pure democracy', alternative family construction, cult behavior, religious worship, rites of passage, sexual liberation, psychological and spiritual healing, or less explicitly defined escapes from the norms of earlier generations, often lumped under the heading of 'communes.' All of the above invariably involved some productive labour. The 'work' of the group was thus a matter of simultaneous affect and effect, making Argyle's claim for a simple triad of distinct human groups, 'family, work, and friendship groups' (1973: 236), problematic. For example, the Living Theatre seems to have been a combination of all three at certain points in the 1960s. It was a self-proclaimed 'tribe', or family group, bound by friendship, yet executed a significant number of work tasks (e.g., more than 800

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<sup>3</sup> A phase-based study of group life was briefly considered for the methodology of this thesis, but such studies are most easily conducted at the time a group is functioning, since they afford an opportunity to view the group 'in progress'. The investigation here is a retrospective one. Interestingly, there have been studies of radical theatre groups, including those that have been selected for study here, that have deployed psychological or social psychological methodologies in 'real time.' See Morris (1989), Rieser (1982), and Weinberg (1992) for examples.

performances, covering six major productions, between late 1964 and early 1970, often under poorly-resourced conditions). Even if one wishes to question the quality of the group's productive work in theatrical terms it seems inappropriate to ignore the belief in the merger of work with life by its members, and separate these out crudely into a binary analytical framework, or to classify it according to other differentiated criteria.

While the deliberate blending of task and emotional aspects of group life is rarely accommodated in the scrutiny of groups, many social psychologists have recognised that group life is more than a contextually indifferent process of interactions between individuals. Social and cultural context matters. Mann (1969), for example, treats group interactions as responses by individuals to plural settings. Much activity by an individual in a group has to do with self-image, conformity, social and cultural trends, and particular cues given by others (Goethals, 1987: 209-29). In social psychology discourses one now routinely finds mention of drive theory, social impact theory, self-attention theory, self-presentation theory, social comparison theory, cognitive dissonance theory, social cognition theory, transactive memory theory, field theory, role theory, learning theory, and cognitive theory (Deaux, 1988: 5-26; Vaughan and Hogg, 1995: 142-65). Great attention is often paid by social psychologists and sociologists to the size of groups, and serious consideration is given to the matter of the optimal size for a small group.<sup>4</sup> The demographics of members, opportunities for free-riding, the 'sociometry', or affective ties within a group, are also regarded as relevant matters for study (Lee, 1978; Moreno, 1953), as are relations between the group and other groups, styles of leadership, and internal communication networks within a group. Other authors, such as Long (1992), have used systems theory to understand groups: 'The group is a 'gestalt' with properties other than those of its constituent parts. Moreover it is a developing and changing system' (17). According to such views, rather than searching for conformity to, or deviation from, a pathological pattern, or 'script' for group life, groups are more properly to be regarded as *loci* and dynamic settings for what is increasingly being described as a 'social learning' process in social science discourses.

Such a view clearly seems to resonate with radical groups of the 1960s, including theatre groups, and how their members would have viewed their involvement as a process of discovery and learning. Many radical theatre groups appeared to be comprised mainly of 'young white middle-class' people. It would be reasonable, then, to assume that membership in radical theatre groups owed something to these young middle-class people wanting to belong to something beyond the confines of square or straight society. For social psychologists an 'in-group' of 'outsiders' is a relatively predictable and socially sanctioned mark of 'growing up'.

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<sup>4</sup> There is no universally agreed optimal 'small group' size amongst researchers, but the usual parameters are between five and twenty, with most favouring the lower end of the scale, nearer ten (See Hare, 1982: 140-54).

However, despite appearances, the radical theatre groups in this study were not entirely homogeneous. Typically, they were founded and led by older individuals, so the notion of the peer 'comfort group' is problematic. Leaders aside, even the Living Theatre in its most hippie incarnation contained several veteran members (often with spouses and children in tow), as did the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Furthermore, both groups were conscious of their ethnic compositions (although ethnic balance did not become official policy until the 1970s in the case of the Mime Troupe). Also, in the case of these two groups, most members held deep political and philosophical commitments. Such commitments carried real risks and costs including imprisonment and persecution.

This suggests more than a youthful preoccupation with 'fitting in' to one's class or ethnic group. Only the Performance Group could be regarded as a relatively homogeneous group. More importantly, perhaps, most, if not all, of the members of these three radical theatre groups would have argued that assimilation was antithetical to their aims; the whole point of their work was to remain in dialectical opposition to the coercive forces of assimilation and capitulation in society at large. Therefore, while social psychology can accommodate issues of leadership, ideology, politics, religion and philosophy, these tend to be seen as secondary and there is the danger that strongly held beliefs and values can too easily be subsumed to reconciliation with socialisation processes.

Actual social psychological studies of theatre groups, radical or otherwise, are relatively scarce, despite a large body of literature on the drama of social life, mostly as experienced by individuals, within sociology (Goffman, 1959, 1974; Brissett and Edgley, 1990; Burns, 1973; Burns and Burns, 1973; Lyman and Scott, 1975, 1989; Yates, 1969). Beyond the more explicitly sociological narratives Moreno (1953), Schechner (1973), and Weinberg (1992) have pursued these connections in considerable depth.

Austrian-born psychologist Jacob Moreno used drama as an aid to his social psychology rather than deploying social psychology in the service of dramatic theory during most of his professional life, although he clearly had a personal interest in improvisatory theatre and theatre collectives during his youth. Moreno was apparently involved in improvisatory or 'spontaneous' theatre in Vienna in the early 1920s, specifically 'Das Stegreift Theater'. He then emigrated to America in 1925, presenting the Living Newspaper, which, according to his followers, he helped pioneer, at the Theatre Guild in 1931 (Anderson, 1975: 209-10; [Zerka] Moreno, 1975: 236-37). Most commentaries on radical American theatres of the 1920s and 1930s usually point to the Living Newspapers of the 'blue blouses' of the early Soviet period (1917-27) as the key source of inspiration for the American theatres. One of the difficulties lies in differentiating between substantive contributions, rhetoric about his 'pioneering' work, and turf battles with other therapists in discussions of his work and career (See Greenberg, 1975). In any case, and as with both Erving Goffman and W. R. Bion, direct connections with the radical theatre groups under study here have not been found except insofar as Richard Schechner has referred to both Moreno and Goffman in his

performance theory writings. Nevertheless, Moreno's role in radical theatre history, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, warrants greater scrutiny.

In group psychology Moreno's name is inextricably linked with the terms 'psychodrama', 'sociodrama' and 'sociometry'. Some of the tools of present-day psychodrama, such as one person mirroring the actions of another, and status elevation techniques, such as the 'high chair', connote some of the exercises used by the Open theatre and the Living Theatre in the 1960s. However, Moreno's dramaturgy is directed at helping the individual patient or 'protagonist' overcome a particular problem. The group, under the expert's direction, 'acts out' the psychodrama to help the individual overcome the problem; they are not there to experiment with each other. Moreno's dramaturgy of the group *qua* group is not explored.

Schechner, by contrast, has had a deep and long-standing interest in group dynamics and group processes as a way of understanding the onstage and offstage activities of theatre groups from early in his career as a theatre practitioner and theorist. For example, he treats leadership roles in a group and alternative communications pathways in great detail in the 'Groups' chapter of *Environmental Theater*. For Schechner, the leader's position in a group is a matter of great concern and he proposes at least three possible types of leadership approach (Schechner, 1973: 265-69). As I argue in the chapters on each of the radical theatre groups under study, Schechner's preoccupation with leadership in the Performance Group and his efforts to preserve his leadership role during the early years of the group's history, Malina and Beck's dissembling rhetoric about the 'withering away' of the director in the Living Theatre, and the 'inner core' leadership experiment of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, all reflect a deep ambivalence about authority and leadership in the climate of pure, radical egalitarianism, or ultrademocracy (this term is discussed in depth in Chapter Three) that held ascendancy in the latter part of the 1960s.

Weinberg (1992: 11-12) also focuses upon communication pathways within the group when discussing collective theatres, or what he terms 'people's theatre'. Eschewing reductionism, but building upon conventional models of group dynamics, he posits a communicative, problem-solving structure for groups organised as collectives, which he calls 'the center'. For Weinberg, a soundly functioning centre provides a clearing-house for all members of a group equally. No single member is closer to the centre or has greater links to it. It follows that leadership is a collective enterprise, although there may be leadership by particular individuals at particular times. The power of such leaders, however, is much more constrained compared to the director-as-leader model of theatre companies or groups. He points out that this is an ideal construction rather than a common phenomenon. The centre is something to aim for or safeguard as much as possible at all times. One can see how this could apply to theatre groups of the 1960s, but as noted in Chapter One, Weinberg distinguishes between the *collective* theatre groups of recent decades which have a clear emphasis on function, and *communal* theatres of the 1960s which had an overriding emphasis on family.

Even so, distinctions between the collective and the communal, semantically speaking, are not always clear. The range of terms and definitions found in a contemporary dictionary would probably apply simultaneously to many radical theatre groups of the 1960s, including those studied here. Yet no single description seems sufficient. They are either too general or too specific:

**collective** -*n.* **1 a** = *collective farm*. **b** any cooperative enterprise. **c** its members. **2** = *collective noun*. ... *Gram.* a noun that is grammatically singular and denotes a collection or number of individuals (e.g. *assembly, family, troop*).

**collectivism** *n.* the theory and practice of the collective ownership of land and the means of production.

**communal** *adj.* **1** relating to or benefiting a community.

**communalism** *n.* **1** a principle of political organization based on federated communes. **2** the principle of collective ownership etc.

**commune** *n.* **1 a** a group of people, not necessarily related, sharing living accommodation, goods, etc., esp. as a political act. **b** a communal settlement esp. for the pursuit of shared interests.

**communion** *n.* **1** a sharing, esp. of thoughts etc.; fellowship (*their minds were in communion*). **2** participation; a sharing in common (*communion of interests*).

**communism** *n.* **1** a political theory derived from Marx, advocating class war and leading to a society in which all property is publicly owned and each person is paid and works according to his or her needs and abilities.

**communitarian** *n.* a member of a communistic community.

**community** *n.* **1 a** all the people living in a specific locality. **b** a specific locality, including its inhabitants. **2** a body of people having a religion, a profession, etc., in common (*the immigrant community*). **3** a fellowship of interests etc.; similarity (*community of intellect*). **4** a monastic, socialistic, etc. body practising common ownership.

**company** *n.* **1 a** a number of people assembled; a crowd; an audience (*addressed the company*). **b** guests or a guest. **2** a state of being a companion or fellow; companionship esp. of a specific kind. **3 a** a commercial business. **b** (usu. *Co.*) the partner or partners not named in the title of a firm. **4** a troupe of actors or entertainers. **5 Mil.** a subdivision of an infantry battalion usu. commanded by a major or a captain. (Compiled from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1990)

For many radical theatre groups questions of property rights, land ownership, Marxism, federation, and formal structural arrangements would not have arisen. They were not communists. Yet their aims were more specific than 'relating to or benefiting a community' and they would have seen themselves as more than a special type of company. Describing them as theatres of 'communion' or as groups of informal communalists is similarly unsatisfactory, since they deliberately produced commodities, or works for consumption by others, much as a conventional communist farm collective would produce food products. Similarly, although the noun 'co-operative', as in a 'local co-op', is not included in the list above, this too seems inadequate, since it steers the description of a group back in the direction of a producing collective, without the requisite connotations of social and emotional needs being met by involvement in such an entity.

Thus, in order to understand the underlying paradigm of the group in radical theatre groups in the 1960s it appears that no ready-made group theory or definition is available. Instead, a synthesis of theoretical constructs is necessary, and, as I argue, this synthesis introduces a useful term not commonly found in dictionaries, i.e., Victor Turner's formulation of *communitas*.



### Neo-Freudian group psychology, Bion and the 'basic assumption group'

Sigmund Freud's paradigm of the group is more or less in concert with that of Le Bon, who wrote *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896), and MacDougall's *The Group Mind* (1920). They were among the first to deploy categories such as 'the crowd', 'collective mental life', 'group psychology', and the 'group mind'. For Freud, the group is an agonistic and antagonistic entity. This position is clearly set out in a monograph, first published in 1922, entitled *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1948: 5-32, 90-100), and it is implicit in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). For Freud, MacDougall, and even Jung, the group constrains the libidinal urges of the individual, but not simply as a positive moderating force. The group equates with the 'primal horde', a regressive, primitive impediment to healthy psychological 'individuation'. Freud extrapolates from what he sees as an ineluctable Oedipal struggle within the family to argue for a similar tension for the individual (ego) mediating its libidinal urges (id) in civilised society (superego). Civilisation, for Freud, means discontent for the individual, although he regards this as a matter of necessity for society to function in an orderly way.

Freud's thinking coalesced at the turn of the twentieth century in the cultural *milieu* of bourgeois patriarchal Viennese society. Early Freudian group psychology thus tends to take as given a paternal leader as paternal figure, emotional projection and transference processes within groups that relate to seeking the leader's approval, and other more or less neurotic behaviours. It is as if the group, by definition, comprises a neurotic rather than a healthy entity. There is markedly less willingness in present-day psychological and sociological approaches to groups to reduce their functioning to simple manifestations of the 'Oedipus complex', the 'death drive' and 'infantile sexuality'. Nevertheless, many theorists and practising psychoanalysts have seen resonances between the dynamics of small groups and the dynamics of primary groups such as the modern nuclear family. Melanie Klein has arguably been the most influential figure in this regard (Klein, 1948; Klein et al., 1952). Her studies of young children pointed to a pre-Oedipal and unconscious existential human condition, which she described as 'psychotic anxiety' (her use of the term 'psychotic' is meant to denote being troubled rather than being deeply disturbed). Psychotic anxieties, although expressed in terms of 'object-relations' or targets of feelings (both internal and external), notably the 'bad breast' of the mother, are normal and are not inherently libidinal. The underlying anxiety is an existential one, driven by an awareness of death, not unlike Heidegger's concept of the 'thrown-ness' of human existence.

In Klein's view there are fundamental binary 'positions' (not phases) in human development and adult life: we occupy either a 'paranoid-schizoid' position, our response to an intrinsic fear of death, or a 'depressive' position, where we internalise and externalise our feelings, often through unconscious phantasies (not fantasies). Klein suggests that, typically, we occupy the latter position in adult life, but in a form with which we are more or less reconciled. In essence, Klein argues that the human condition is one of constant interplay between unconscious phantasies, between introjections (often the internalisation of loved objects)

and between projective identifications (externalising internal conflicts by projecting them onto external objects). Although the family is often the main frame of reference for such interplay, Klein argues that these anxieties precede socialisation, making particular constellations of 'family', whether nuclear or not, of secondary interest.

The degree to which Klein's theories can contribute to group psychology has been most thoroughly explored by psychologist W.R. Bion, who is less well known than either Freud or Klein. Bion, favouring Klein's views more than Freud's, proposes a general model of group function, the 'basic-assumption' group. This is derived in part from Bion's own clinical method, which was developed in the context of the immediate post-WWII era and the rehabilitation of returning servicemen who displayed varying degrees of battlefield trauma. Perhaps inadvertently to begin with, his approach was a radical experiment in leadership within a group – he refused, partly out of lack of confidence, to position himself as leader when the therapeutic group first came together. This personal and professional diffidence about leadership and authority in therapeutic groups in the 1940s and 1950s, which forced the group to fall back on its own resources, in my view, prefigures the way in which the matter of leadership in radical theatre groups tended to be viewed in the 1960s.

His main 'theory', such as it is, appears relatively uncomplicated. Bion argues in *Experiences in Groups, and Other Papers* that the human group is a necessary, but problematic, engagement for the individual: 'The individual is a group animal at war, not simply with the group, but with himself for being a group animal and with those aspects of his personality that constitute his groupishness' (1961: 131). While he concedes that a task-oriented group might, in principle, achieve its stated ends in a logical, or at least non-traumatic, sequence, he believes that most groups tend towards an unconscious, potentially neurotic form of functioning:

Work group activity is obstructed, diverted, and on occasion assisted, by certain other mental activities that have in common the attribute of powerful emotional drives. These activities, at first sight chaotic, are given a certain cohesion if it is assumed that they spring from certain basic assumptions common to all the group. (146)

This assertion, if true, carries major implications. Firstly, all groups are vulnerable to a default to certain unconscious basic assumptions, suggesting that all will have moments, if not episodes, of anxiety. Secondly, if a group is established with some conscious assumptions, or principles, that run counter to these unconscious assumptions, then this would seem to be a recipe for serious conflict, especially if one or more members are in the least degree emotionally unstable as individuals.

The 'basic assumption' group, according to Bion, adheres to three main principles: expectation of and need for a leader, with relatively predictable forms of reactive behaviour if and when the idealised leader fails to provide for all its needs; a propensity for fostering, sanctioning (and using as a scapegoat where necessary) a sexualised pair-bond within the group as a primitive affirmation of group health; and, a flight/fight

response tendency. Bion specifies these in terms of the following three assumptions (I have paraphrased slightly below):

- 1) The group is met in order to be sustained by a leader on whom it depends for nourishment.
- 2) The group seeks and supports an internal pairing which can hold centre stage and which elicits such sentiments as 'marriage would put an end to neurotic disabilities; that group therapy would revolutionise society when it had spread sufficiently; that the coming season, spring, summer, autumn, or winter, as the case may be, will be more agreeable; that some kind of new community – an improved group – should be developed, and so on.'
- 3) The group is met in order to fight something or to run away from it. (147-52)

In regard to the first assumption, Bion's main suggestion is that many groups come together with a particular underlying anxiety about the leader, over and above apprehensions about members in general, when they meet for the first time. The spotlight, so to speak, is on the leader. Bion found from his own experience in leading therapeutic groups that if the leader does not immediately reassure the group about its direction and survival, this generates greater anxiety. The vacuum, so to speak, tends to be filled with attacks upon, and defences of, the leader by group members, who may internalise the leader as a love-object or they may project their own misgivings about themselves as individuals and their abilities onto the leader. Such responses are consistent with a tendency toward the other two assumptions. The group may fixate upon a pair-bond in the group as compensation for the absence of a satisfactory leader, or it may direct its attention elsewhere, into escapist fantasies for example, or it may become inward-looking to the extent that blame for the perceived failings of the leader gets redistributed amongst the other members who get locked into interpersonal conflict. Under such conditions, the prospects for task work completion seem very limited. Bion's conception of 'fight/flight' in his third assumption, then, does not refer to the group's stated mission or its status in relationship to other groups or society at large. The group is not met to fight inequality or City Hall. He uses fight and flight to refer to issues internal to the group.<sup>5</sup> The group either confronts these issues or escapes into distracting behaviour. It is Bion's conviction that *all* groups are susceptible to such tendencies:

Many techniques are in daily use for the investigation of work-group function. For the investigation of basic-assumption phenomena, I consider psycho-analysis, or some extension of technique derived directly from it, to be essential. But since work-group functions are always pervaded by basic-assumption phenomena it is clear that techniques that ignore the latter will give misleading impressions of the former. (154)

In other words, while there can exist a basic-assumption group that is not also a work-group, there cannot exist a work-group that is not at times a basic-assumption group.

In keeping with psycho-analytic orthodoxy, which assumes that underlying group processes tend to be relatively opaque to those in the group, unless revealed to them by expert intervention, Bion does not deal

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<sup>5</sup>Preston (1997: 11 fn.) usefully connects a Bion-based 'flight-fight-unite' model of group development with the 'form-norm-storm-perform' models of Tuckman and Jensen and others.

with the possibility that groups with a conscious interest in the tension between task work and social-emotional ties may form voluntarily, and perhaps thrive, without the guidance of a therapeutic figure. Furthermore, Bion's other work, such as *Alienation and Transformation* (1970), does not greatly advance the basic-assumption group model, although others, notably Gould (1997) and Young (1992; 1994), have argued that the model holds great explanatory power, and is germane to any theories of group dynamics, particularly when accompanied by deep attention to Klein's 'object relations' theory.

Still, for Bion, the individual remains the focus of study. Unlike Foulkes (1968), who is highly optimistic about group psychology, and who sees the life of the group as a sequence of the gradual overcoming of initial uncertainties and conflicts, Bion sees a fundamental tension:

It is clear that when a group forms the individuals forming it hope to achieve some satisfaction from it. It is also clear that the first thing they are aware of is a sense of frustration produced by the presence of the group of which they are members. (1961: 53)

Despite Bion's return to individual psychology in his own work, his model invites comparison with the explicit exploration of both task and social-emotional dimensions of the group experience in radical groups in the 1960s, including theatre groups, particularly because of the way in which Bion brackets the role of the leader from the outset. There is also something about the open-endedness of Bion's personal approach to the management of groups in the therapeutic setting that resonates with the way in which radical theatre groups themselves often operated. While Bion presents himself as intensely analytic and organised in his written discourses, by his own admission he was not sure what to do when he was first put in charge of groups. The awkward silences and confessions of personal anxiety about how to run things that characterised his early therapeutic interventions became a key to authentic explorations of group life:

At the appointed time members of the group begin to arrive; individuals engage with each other in conversation for a short time, and then, when a certain number has collected, a silence falls on the group. After a while desultory conversation breaks out again, and then another silence falls. It becomes clear to me that I am, in some sense, the focus of attention in the group. Furthermore, I am aware of feeling uneasily that I am expected to do something. At this point I confide my anxieties to the group, remarking that, however mistaken my attitude might be, I feel just this. . . . I soon find that my confidence is not very well received. . . . (29)

These comments, as is shown in the relevant chapters, echo the contents of directors' notes for the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group from the late 1960s. Bion then goes on to describe the consequences of his obstinate refusal to lead in terms of the basic-assumption responses by group members as outlined earlier: fixation on a pair-bond in the group and flight or fight activity. Three points are worth noting here. The first is the opening up of an 'existential space' for a group simply to be a group, which became the hallmark of much group experimentation in the 1960s. The second is that Bion's 'laissez faire' approach to 'plot' resonates very much with the emptying of narrative from performance in the 1960s in the belief that something more collectively authentic would take the place of a premeditated 'dialogue' written by only one individual. Thirdly, and this is perhaps most important, the group that Bion describes anticipates a strong paternal leader, but it is also ambivalent in its attitude towards the leader.

This last point is relevant insofar as it impinges upon the general principle of 'ultrademocracy' that many have claimed suffused countercultural sectors of American society in the 1960s, where leadership and power issues were often of paramount importance in group activity.

Furthermore, the issue of an 'internal pairing', particularly in the absence of an overtly paternalistic and charismatic leadership figure, is especially important, as this seems to have been the second line of (parental) 'authority' in groups where equal opportunity was assumed to reign. As I will argue, the three radical theatre groups in question had to wrestle with the issue of the 'marriage dyad' at the centre. In the 1960s this expectation was almost entirely inverted. The authentic group experience was one in which the notion of leadership was banished in favour of an ultrademocratic radical egalitarianism. Radical groups, including radical theatre groups, faced the difficult challenge of accommodating the principle of leadership within a non-hierarchical organisation. Furthermore, in radical theatre groups, the notions of authorship of text, 'leading' actors and other privileged roles were placed under great suspicion, at least in a normative sense.

This is not to say that Bion's interpretation of group dynamics is necessarily correct. Like Freud, Bion's view of group activity is rarely positive. For Bion, the group situation is almost always a source of threat to the individual. This seems to reflect a normative philosophical commitment on the part of many twentieth century psychologists that disregards the historicised framing of civilised society by Marx and others as a peculiar set of social relations emerging in capitalist society from the eighteenth century onwards. For the latter, such social relations, however real, are not necessarily what they ought to be; the individual is the aberration. Whatever one's philosophical outlook, this does not alter the fact that often the group experience is indeed estranged and remote, the individual experience is immediate and familiar, and it is this epistemological position that is used in order to navigate through social interactions. Thus the descriptions of Freud and Bion may accurately reflect patterns of behaviour of people in groups in Western society regardless of their potential mutability. And while it does not follow that this is the universal behaviour of people in groups, or that the underlying idea of the group held by members of Western capitalist societies is as riddled with dark notions of castration, mutilation, and sacrifice as Freud and others have claimed, it does establish that the group is an uncertain existential space. To bring to it the only familiar idea available, that of a group based upon the involuntarily-joined and frequently hierarchical familial experience (which is also supportive and nurturing), is thus logical.

In the 1960s, then, for better or worse, the idea of the group as something uncertain, was confronted with an ideal that attempted to erase the concept of the familiar family, however impoverished. Countercultural values made the conventional nuclear family an object of suspicion, along with a host of established community groups, on the grounds that they were typically the sites of authoritarian control. By the end of

the decade a radical version of democracy, at once collectivist, and yet intolerant of any abrogation of individual freedom, appears to have held sway.

### **Goffman, the authentic self, and breaking the theatrical frame**

The mingling of a preoccupation with individual freedom and the right to freedom of expression with a belief in the good of the collective in the 1960s is reflected in a number of institutions (civil rights groups, 'Movement' organisations) and practices (yoga, nudity, primal therapy, psychotropic drug experimentation) that emerged in this period. According to Croyden this was a hallmark of experimental theatre at the time:

The new theatre groups turned to nudity and sex, LSD, and rock; sensitivity training, group encounter, and consciousness raising; anarchy, primitivism, and Oriental philosophy; pastoral and commune life; bisexuality, homosexuality, and group fornication; acting out and being one's self; patterned responses and spontaneous feeling; and the merging of art and reality. These themes – considered radical – became incorporated not only in the groups' life style, but dominated the subject matter of their art. (1974: xxi)

One of the interesting tensions created in this enthusiasm for self-expression in a number of novel group settings was the degree to which people saw themselves primarily as social selves or individual selves. Since so much effort seems to have been expended in rejecting what appeared to be socially imposed roles it would appear that the individualist conception of self was often paramount. Rather than accept the roles assigned by others, the dramaturgy, or staging of self was a unitary whole – there was no difference between the public and the private self. The figure most associated with the use of the dramaturgical metaphor in regard to the self is Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman, often referred to as a 'micro-sociologist' because of his focus on the quotidian aspects of daily life and the unremarkable routines often ignored by other sociologists.

The volume most discussed in relation to the metaphor is probably his popular best-seller *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, first published in 1959. There is in this work a strong sense that daily life involves the careful management of 'impressions' by an individual, and reciprocally, the attendant interpretation of those impressions as 'expressions' by others. He states 'The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*' (1959: 2). Goffman uses a framework of 'performance', 'region', 'team' and other terms which can be incorporated within 'impression management'. He argues that the individual presents, in everyday life, a 'front', both public, insofar as external props are used in a 'setting', and personal, in terms of physical appearance and disposition or attitude (22-30). Much of an individual's time amongst others is spent managing this front, requiring active mobilisation of it, i.e., dramatising it (sometimes exaggerating actions), idealising it (this may include downplaying) or concealing some elements of behaviour (ulterior motives, mistakes, draft versions, dirty

work, illegality) (30-48). Some relief from this effort is afforded through 'discrepant roles' and 'communication out of character', which everybody understands and accommodates.

This close attention by the individual to concealment and to possible errors of concealment has often led to accusations that Goffman paints a bleak picture of human nature, as if an individual is always engaged in deceiving those he or she meets, like Machiavelli's hypothetical ruling Prince, who 'acts' more or less constantly in bad faith.<sup>6</sup> However, Goffman stresses that the actions of the individual are part of a socially-embedded process of 'collaborative manufacture':

In analyzing the self, then we are drawn from its possessor, from the person who will profit or lose most by it, for he and his body merely provide the peg on which something of a collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time. And the means for producing and maintaining selves do not reside inside the peg; in fact, these means are often bolted down in social establishments. There will be a back region with its tools for shaping the body, and a front region with its fixed props. There will be a team of persons whose activity on stage in conjunction with available props will constitute the scene from which the performed character's self will emerge, and another team, the audience, whose interpretive activity will be necessary for this emergence. The self is a product of all these arrangements, and in all of its parts bears the mark of this genesis. (253)

Furthermore, accusations of an overriding and cynical individualism underlying Goffman's arguments do not hold when one considers the total content of *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Apart from the fact that a whole chapter is devoted to 'Teams' (77-105), nearly half of the total discussion deals with the co-operative aspects of impression management between 'performers' and 'audiences'. It is clear from his discussion that such behaviour has an inherently positive or constructive character. Thus, in Goffman's view the negotiation of daily life involves recourse to several selves, not just a solipsistic, private, 'unmasked' self, alternating with a sham, public, 'masked' self. By adopting roles with some degree of self-consciousness we can achieve 'role distance', which allows us to continue with a practice even though it troubles us in some way. Furthermore, there must be implicitly agreed-upon conventions for an individual's managing of impressions, and this allows for a certain amount of collusion, whether between two individuals, or within or between larger groups. Even the unanticipated breaking down of an attempt at impression management has codified rules (hence humour), allowing us to note the break in some way and then resume a role-based transaction. Without broad social collaboration, neither individual, nor collective dramatic presentations could exist:

A team, then, may be defined as a set of individuals whose intimate co-operation is required if a given projected definition of the situation is to be maintained. A team is a grouping, but it is a grouping not in relation to a social structure or social organisation but rather in relation to an interaction or series of interactions in which the relevant definition of the situation is maintained. (104)

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<sup>6</sup> A literature on 'Machiavellianism' has flourished from time-to-time, and has similarly had to address accusations of a negative view of human nature (Christie 1970: 1-9).

Far from suggesting a Machiavellian or Hobbesian world of fiercely individualistic competition, then, Goffman seems to point to a general, highly codified, and plural social conspiracy to dissemble on a day-to-day basis.

However, it is worth noting at this point that irrespective of how one conceives and interprets Goffman's own view of human nature, the material in *The Presentation of Self* is historically and socially circumscribed. He draws mainly from a (doctoral) sociological study of a crofting community in the Shetland Islands in the early 1950s, together with miscellaneous examples from the socio-cultural world of the 1940s and 1950s. What he describes is thus closely related to immediate post-WWII society in the United States, the United Kingdom, and other parts of Europe, often regarded as distinctly conservative, conformist, and consensus-driven, and about which there was a great degree of critical concern in the decades that followed (hence the literary and film censorship battles in the UK in the 1960s). Goffman's 'everyday life' here is that of the 'square', Cold-War era.

This is important insofar as the descriptions of human activity provided here by Goffman could have been seen, unintentionally, perhaps, from Goffman's point of view, to fall within an emerging literature of social criticism, characterised by such works as Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), Reisman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), and Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* (1960). Bigsby (1985: 7-10), for example, cites such works as a backdrop to the changes that took place in the theatre in the 1960s. To a generation coming of age during the 1960s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* might have read as a kind of 'anti-manifesto' for the self. I suggest anti-manifesto because many would have read Goffman's fundamental assertions about the collaborative social construction of the self and the everydayness of role-playing in the presence of others as matters of fact and a mandate for rule-breaking, without necessarily considering the consequences of attempting to dispense with the mental safeguards provided by roles and masks. An overriding pre-occupation in the 1960s, due in no small measure to existentialist and beat philosophy carried over from the 1940s and 1950s, was the search for the 'authentic' self. Thus, any seemingly dissembling behaviour on the part of individuals, or any collectively sanctioned role playing, such as that limned by Goffman, would have been almost systematically repudiated as 'inauthentic' by those in search of authenticity.

More than one commentator has suggested a dated aspect to Goffman's account of experience:

Ironically, Goffman published *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* in 1959, on the threshold of one of the most turbulent decades of American life. While people in the 1960s continued to 'play roles', they were not the same roles that had been played in the past. In Goffman's terms, the performers were combining previously distinct performances and styles of interaction. Behaviours that were once kept in the 'backstage' area of life – such as sex and drugs and foul language – were now being thrust into the public arena. People were dressing and speaking in public as if they were at home. Indeed, Goffman's 1950s descriptions of appropriate back region behaviour could serve as a description of many of the 'shocking' front region behaviours of the protest marches and sit-ins of the late 1960s. (Meyrowitz, 1990: 72)



Interestingly, Performance Group director Richard Schechner, writing in the late 1960s, was similarly quizzical about the validity of the life/theatre divide in Goffman's analysis of society:

I wonder if Goffman has since changed his mind. The distinctive features he attributes to theatre are precisely those that have eroded so swiftly during the past five years. We have ongoing theatrical activity that is not 'make-believe,' in which actors present themselves as themselves and not as characters, and in which the audience is either physically involved or non-existent. Where then does that leave 'life'? (1969b: 196)

When Goffman reconsidered his dramaturgical metaphor in great detail in a work entitled *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1974), his position had not radically changed. He refers to plays by Jean Genet, Eugene Ionesco, Joseph Heller, and Jack Gelber. He loses no opportunity to relay recent events in the theatre, including some connected with radical theatre groups. He notes the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now* and the use of audience participation (419) and nudity (432-34), and the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69*, with its obvious autobiographical comments injected by the performers (353) and disruptive audience participation (435). He also acknowledges 'short-lived' avant-garde performance innovations such as 'Happenings', and the 'straight-faced concerts of John Cage's aleatory music' (408), which disrupted conventional audience expectations at the time. These examples, however, are used to reinforce the notion of temporary detours from a fixed 'theatrical frame', rather than to indicate any major transformations towards a new construction, either of self or performance.

Goffman seems content, ultimately, to leave intact the notion of staging of daily life as a normal process, despite greater interest in the how of such staging and its centrality to social life. In *The Presentation of Self* (1959: 254) he cautions that the theatre can only be used as a metaphor, not as an explanatory model. He appears to rescind this in *Frame Analysis*: 'All the world *is* like a stage, we *do* strut and fret our hour on it. And that is all the time we have. But what's the stage like, and what are those figures that people it?' (1974: 124). Goffman is actually more at pains in *Frame Analysis* to show the difference between rehearsed and controlled theatrical artifice, and the contingencies of daily social exchanges between people that sometimes force or allow them to break the 'theatrical frame'. He sets out a number of 'transcription practices' that, on his view, show the difference between staged and unstaged behaviour. I have summarised these below, dividing the first of his eight conditions into two, to yield nine putative differences between staged theatrical behaviour and unstaged public behaviour:

- spatial boundaries are clearly defined between actors on stage and audience;
- the action starts 'unnaturally' insofar as the curtain goes up to reveal an episode already in progress;
- rather than a mere dividing line between actors and audience, there is typically a simulation of a room, minus one wall and ceiling, the incompleteness of which the actors feign obliviousness to;
- actors speaking dialogue strike unnatural angled poses downstage in order to let the audience see and hear what is being said;

- one or two actors will be in the 'spotlight' at any one time, requiring the other actors to mute their speech and movement until it is their 'turn';
- actors allow for lengthy and complete turn-taking in order to maximise audience comprehension and response;
- a precise 'disclosive compensation' takes place in a number of ways to help 'fill in' the audience about what is being said or done by actors (asides, soliloquies, self-confession) together with the censoring of normal ramblings, digressions and/or omissions that typify 'real' conversations;
- utterances are amplified in volume, enunciation, and in the economy of their meaning, wit, and imagery; and
- there is no 'dead' space or time upon the stage that the audience will need to identify and discard as unimportant to the process of communication. (1974: 139-44)

It is a somewhat static proscenium model of the theatre that Goffman uses for his theatrical frame. Granted, he does not pass judgement on the basic dramaturgy of daily life. Performing everyday life is, for Goffman, normal. However, given the preoccupation with authenticity and 'being real' in the 1960s one could reasonably expect any authenticity-seeking young adult or theatre group of the period to have found his demarcations, had they been promulgated then, openly provocative, a list of rules in need of constant breaking.

Indeed, at least one author has used Goffman's demarcations of the theatrical frame as an anti-thesis against which to read the work of New York's Grand Union in the 1970s. Sally Banes notes that the previous decade set a certain tone:

During those years, American culture generally expressed themes of concern with cooperation, collective living and working situations, and attention to process over finished product. In politics and social situations as well as in the fine arts, people began to look to spontaneity and improvisatory methods to provide a life better than that which a rigidly constructed, individual-oriented, hierarchical society had created. . . The Open Theater, Living Theater, and the San Francisco Mime Troupe were among the many theater groups looking for collective forms in both the working process and the content of plays that they performed. (1987: 208-9)

Banes refers specifically to Goffman's dramaturgical perspective and deliberately invokes Goffman's theatrical frame, and his eight 'rules' for theatricality, as an 'anti-agenda' for dancers and choreographers, and for experimental theatre groups:

The Grand Union stubbornly challenged the limits of performance by breaking all of these rules. As I've said they were not alone in testing the limits of theatre; besides the groups mentioned above, Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theater, Meredith Monk and The House, The Performance Group, Robert Wilson, Structuralist Workshop, and others have experimented with fragmenting plot, character and locale information, with using more movement than words, with presenting ordinary conversation, often inaudible, on stage, and with providing an overload of foci among which the audience must make choices. (214)

Banes makes a special pleading for Grand Union's 'presentation of life as dance' as more thoroughgoing and fluid than the aforementioned theatre groups. However, the most salient point here is the reflexive understanding of performance *vis-à-vis* life that characterised many art forms in the 1960s. The implication, then, is that Goffman, despite his extensive discussion of the 'keying' of experience i.e., the systematic transcription of the familiar into a novel form, does not appear to have considered the possibility that 'performance', itself a 'keying' of real experience, could be consciously 're-keyed' by those involved in theatre itself, precisely in order to break the frame of inauthentic behaviour in life.

Interestingly, other commentators on theatricality in social life have anticipated this transformation:

Perhaps one could, sooner or later, reach a situation where some theatrical performances could be used as a collection of signals and calls to arouse collective actions and where the audience, deriving from clearly defined, structured social frameworks, could be incited to participate in the actors' performance and carry it over into real life. (Gurvitch qtd. in Burns and Burns, 1973: 81)

The editors of the book in which Gurvitch's remarks appear add the observation that 'Made in 1955, these suggestions are remarkably close to the actual developments of 'living theatre' and the like which occurred in the 1960s' (Burns and Burns, 1973: 81). It is also worth noting that Gurvitch's comments resonate with the sentiments of Antonin Artaud. Artaud's 'signalling through the flames' metaphor, which evoked the image of the essential actor being an actor-as-martyr in a re-animated Western theatre, is contained in the preface to *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958: 13). His work first reached the American reading public in the late 1950s.

In fairness to Goffman, however, it should be added that the commentators who have made capital out of the similarities between life and theatre have generally stopped short of denying any difference between them whatsoever. For example, Elizabeth Burns leaves open the question of authenticity in the 'new theatre' and its boundaries:

In relation to the theatre, reality and illusion are shifting terms. They do not denote opposites. Everything that happens on stage can be called real, because it can be seen and heard to happen. It is perceived by the senses and is therefore as real as anything that happens outside the theatre. On the other hand there is an agreement between all those who take part in the performance, either as actors or spectators, that the two kinds of real event inside and outside the theatre are not causally connected. Dislocation is ensured both because nobody really believes the actors to be the people they represent and because action that significantly alters the state of the situation, such as murder, death by other causes, copulation and birth, are always simulated. Neither of these statements is now true of the new theatre. Groups such as the La Mama and the Living Theatre often try to act out their own private problems on the stage - to be in fact the same people off-stage as on. There is also some pressure from such groups to be allowed to show copulation on the stage. (1973: 15)

As most histories of radical theatre since the 1960s aver, and as I discuss in the chapters on the three radical theatre groups, this trend was ultimately curtailed, not in the least because the absence of any kind of socially constructed role left the individual more exposed than protected, often to the extent of threatening real physical or psychological harm. However, there was at one point a sense that the presentation of self in everyday life had to be self-authored. The logic, in terms of natural psychic defences, of presentation of self

as selves, and the mutual benefits gained from conforming to the rules of presentation, which seems, ultimately, to be Goffman's main point, was too easily ignored in the quest for personal authenticity.

### **Communal traditions and Kanter's 'commitment maintenance' thesis**

Marxist analysis suggests that in Western 'civil society' an underlying privilege is extended to the concept of the individual when compared to the concept of the group or collective. Perhaps by way of unconscious compensation for this circumstance and given the hostility towards group paradigms associated with the 'Establishment', including the nuclear family, the otherwise innate impulse towards, or the idealisation of, the collective would have had to find some positive expressive form in the 1960s, even if concrete forms of legitimate small groups were not immediately at hand.

One of the obvious manifestations of this was the commune movement, which appeared to sweep America in the 1960s and 1970s. It was not a new phenomenon:

America has always been a land of communal experiments. The first European settlers often formed communal groups – and, before them, Indian tribes lived communally: the pueblos are the most ancient American communes still functioning. (Jerome, 1974: 3)

Bestor, in *Backwoods Utopias: The sectarian and Owenite phases of communitarian socialism in America, 1663-1829*, published in 1950, discusses some of the more notable early communal experiments by the 'settlers'. He deals in detail with Robert Owen's impact upon utopian thinking in America and discusses Brook Farm, New Harmony and the Oneida community. He also illustrates the great magnitude of this experimentation, particularly in New England. A few authors have seen a lineage from Brook Farm to latter day communal experiments. In an article published in the countercultural periodical *Ramparts*, entitled 'A Social History of the Hippies', one writer observes: 'It is not improbable, after a few more mountain seminars by those purposeful young men wearing beads, that the Haight-Ashbury may spawn the first utopian collectivist community since Brook Farm.' (Hinckle, 1967: 209)

A similar link has indeed been acknowledged in direct theatrical terms by Richard Schechner, who cites Brook Farm as a point of reference for the creation of the Performance Group's *Commune* (1970-71), a work which also uses the testimony of the Charles Manson 'family' (sometimes referred to as a commune), and the media reports of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam as textual material.

Furthermore, researchers studying the communal living phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s have made more direct empirical comparisons with the earlier historical examples described by Bestor. Of these, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* is regarded as a benchmark study. She sees three major historical 'waves' in the communal impetus:

the first lasted from early days to about 1845, when religious themes were prominent; the second, stressing economic and political issues, ran from 1820 to 1930, flourishing especially in the 1840s; and the third, psycho-social period emerged after World War Two and became especially important in the 1960s. (1972: 8)

Comparing utopian communities of the nineteenth century with the communes of the 1960s, Kanter finds that the critical factor in all such experiments is the maintenance of 'commitment'. She firmly situates commitment, and its perpetuation, within a utopian tradition:

At a number of times in history, groups of people have decided that the ideal can become reality, and they have banded together in communities to bring about the fulfillment of their own utopian aspirations. Generally the idea of utopia has involved a way of life shared with others – shared in such a way that the benefit of all is ensured... The ideal of social unity has led to the formation of numerous communes and utopian communities. These are voluntary, value-based, communal social orders. Because members join and choose to remain, conformity within the community is based on commitment – on the individual's own desire to obey its rules – rather than on force or coercion. Members are controlled by the entire membership or by individuals they respect within the community rather than by outside agents or political forces. A commune seeks self-determination, often making its own laws and refusing to obey some of those set by larger society. (2)

Kanter's comparison of earlier and later groups suggests a higher degree of success in continuance because of stronger maintenance of commitment. On her view, successful commitment-maintenance rests upon three principles, each of which contains two further characteristics. The first principle is 'continuance commitment', based upon sacrifice and investment. The second is 'cohesion commitment', requiring repeated acts of renunciation and communion. The third is 'control commitment', involving rituals of mortification and transcendence. These factors can be shown in diagrammatic form. (See Table 2.1 on page 42)

Kanter's survey of the earlier communes shows that those that deployed most, if not all, of the mechanisms listed in the table had the best rates of survival. Conversely, those that quickly disintegrated had fewer of these mechanisms in place. When looking at communes of the 1960s she finds fewer of these attributes and predicts a much lower degree of success for the latter-day groups in terms of their longevity. In mitigation of this negative finding Kanter notes an important distinction between utopian experiments of the past and those of the 1960s, both in terms of expectations for large-scale change in society and in terms of communal group size:

Today there is a renewed search for utopia and community in America – for alternative, group-oriented ways of life. But overwhelmingly, the grand utopian visions of the past have been replaced by a concern with relations in a small group. Instead of conceptions of alternative societies, what is emerging are conceptions of alternative families. . . . Of the vast numbers of communes emerging today (one *New York Times* estimate in 1970 was over two thousand; in 1971 a National Institute of Health spokesman estimated three thousand), only a few are larger than thirty people. (165-66)

Table 2.1 Kanter's Commitment Mechanisms for successful communes

<b>Commitment Principle</b>	<b>Requirement from members</b>	<b>Process by which this is achieved</b>
Continuance	Sacrifice	Abstinence (sexual and chemical) Austerity (frugal living)
	Investment	Irreversibility of investment
Cohesion	Renunciation	Renunciation of outside world, the couple, the family
	Communion	Homogeneity of membership Communal sharing Communal work Regularised group contact Ritual Persecution from without
Control	Mortification	Confession and mutual criticism sessions sanctions Spiritual differentiation (ranking of some as 'higher' spirits) De-individuating mechanisms (style of dress)
	Transcendence	'institutionalised awe', created by: coherent ideology; decision-making hierarchies; charismatic leadership; and mystification detailed guidebooks and rules for all conduct mandatory formal conversion to beliefs perceived connection to prior tradition or organisation

(Source: adapted from Kanter 1972: 74-125)

The absence of a full set of commitment mechanisms in communes of the 1960s is thus not surprising. The longevity of the commune may simply not have mattered as greatly to the communards of the 1960s. People were experimenting with social relations without necessarily trying to create entirely new social orders and people in communes at this time seem to have had a much deeper philosophical opposition to hierarchy of any kind than had their earlier counterparts. Looking at Kanter's factors in the above table, for example, it is unlikely that a communard of the 1960s would have embraced or cultivated most of the 'control' commitment mechanisms (spiritual stratification, autocratic or charismatic leadership, mystification, conversion), at least not consciously. Similarly, although sacrifice as a requirement would readily have been accepted by communards of the 1960s, frugality would have been an easier mechanism to enforce than sexual continence and abstinence from alcohol or drugs.

Furthermore, while the later groups would have embraced many of the cohesion mechanisms described above, including renunciation of existing kin and social ties, the view of communion was generally less exclusive of outsiders. Many rituals of communion in communes involved food, psychotropic drugs, music, sex, and religious or spiritual teachings and these were often made available to visitors and the unconverted. Thus the boundaries for the later groups were often highly permeable and deliberately so, and while this may have been conducive to certain social-emotional aims, it would have posed challenges for the assigning of task roles, and the completion of tasks.

The group paradigm, then, along with being more psycho-socially experimental than in earlier periods, was also more ambitious in terms of ideals of egalitarianism (no hierarchy) and individual liberty (no exclusive 'branding' of members, nor demand for irreversible investment). Another way of understanding the distinction between the communal experiments of earlier times with those of the 1960s is to consider the former as experiments in community, with resemblances to the ordinary structures of communities, including social stratification and hierarchy, while the latter may more appropriately be described as experiments in *communitas*.

### Turner's liminality and differing types of *communitas*

Anthropologist Victor Turner has written extensively on *communitas* and liminality, particularly in the context of rites of passage. For this, Turner borrows from folklorist Arnold Van Gennep's observations about rites of passage in traditional societies: 'He defined *rites de passage* as 'rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position, and age' (Turner, 1977: 36). He adds:

These rites of transition, says Van Gennep, are separation; margin (or *limen*); and re-aggregation. The first and last speak for themselves; they detach ritual subjects from their old places in society and return them, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to new places. A more interesting problem is provided by the middle, (marginal) or liminal phase (*ibid.*).

Liminality in traditional or pre-industrial societies conforms to rule-bound sociocultural patterns. A subject, or group of subjects, is firstly symbolically and physically separated from the larger society, or 'the structure', as Turner describes it, then placed in a transitional state, or liminal phase, for a defined period, (this creates an ephemeral 'anti-structure'). The subject or subjects are then symbolically and physically incorporated once more into the structure upon a cue from that structure. Turner adds '(t)he *liminal* phases of tribal society invert but do not usually subvert the *status quo*, the structural form, of society' (1982: 41).

Despite this apparent overarching constraint on behaviour in tribal or pre-industrial societies Turner, as he notes himself, is particularly interested in this liminal phase. He argues that although one is temporarily designated by society to be a 'non-person' and has no status or power, a great freedom exists to create, experiment, and break rules, albeit for a temporary and pre-determined period. In relation to ritual and cultural performance Turner claims that the 'dominant genres of performance in societies at all levels of scale and complexity tend to be *liminal phenomena*. They are performed in privileged spaces and times, set off from the periods and areas reserved for work, food and sleep' (25).<sup>7</sup> 'Liminalities' (1977: 37), as he terms them, typically experience a sense of *communitas*, which he defines in terms of 'an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community or even communion of equal individuals who submit to the general authority of the ritual elders' (1969: 96). Turner adds that

<sup>7</sup> Turner lists dramatic forms such as the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, the Japanese Noh theatre and Brecht and the German Epic Theatre as what one could call paradigmatic liminal phenomena (1982: 27-28).

communitas operates at the level of direct interpersonal experience: 'Essentially, communitas is a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals' (1969: 131), and at the same time communitas is unbounded by roles and statuses, acting as a kind of background environment. This ubiquity, however, is problematic:

But the spontaneity of and immediacy of communitas – as opposed to the jural-political character of structure – can seldom be maintained for very long. Communitas itself soon develops a structure, in which free relationships between individuals become converted into norm-governed relationships between social personae. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish between: (1) *existential* or *spontaneous* communitas – approximately what the hippies today would call 'a happening,' and William Blake might have called 'the winged moment flies' or, later, 'mutual forgiveness of each vice'; (2) *normative* communitas, where, under the influence of time, the need to mobilize and organize resources, and the necessity for social control among the members of the group in pursuance of these goals, the existential communitas is organized into a perduring social system; and (3) *ideological* communitas, which is a label one can apply to a variety of utopian models of societies based on existential communitas. (132)

This distinction between types of communitas is highly pertinent to the present study. As is claimed in subsequent chapters, the three radical theatre groups studied faced the challenge of reconciling differing tensions within the communitas they sought and experienced. Although the three groups encountered each of the dimensions outlined, I will argue that the Living Theatre focussed on the ideological and existential dimensions, the San Francisco Mime Troupe emphasised the normative and ideological aspects, while the Performance Group explored existential communitas first and foremost.

On top of this differentiation (and promisingly if one is to look for less deterministic models of group behaviour than are implied by both Bion and Goffman) Turner demarcates very clearly between pre-industrial and post-industrial societies:

Undoubtedly, in large-scale complex societies, with a high degree of specialization and division of labor, and with many single-interest, associational ties and a general weakening of close corporate bonds, the situation is likely to be very different. In order to experience communitas, individuals will seek membership of would-be universal ideological movements, whose motto might well be Tom Paine's 'the world is my village.' Or, they will join small-scale 'withdrawal' groups, like the hippie and digger<sup>8</sup> communities of San Francisco and New York, where 'the village is my world.' The difficulty that these groups have so far failed to resolve is that tribal communitas is the complement and obverse of tribal structure, and, unlike the New World utopians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they have not yet developed a structure capable of maintaining social and economic order over very long periods of time. The very flexibility and mobility of social relations in modern industrial societies, however, may provide better conditions for the emergence of existential communitas, even if only in countless and transient encounters, than any previous form of social order. (1969: 202-3)

This search for communitas, then, can be seen as an attempt to de-alienate and embrace the collective experience, but without the expectation of a return to a pre-determined social position. Turner believes that, as with the Beat generation before them, the hippie 'emphasis on spontaneity, immediacy, and 'existence'

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<sup>8</sup> The Diggers, as is shown in Chapter Five, started as an off-shoot of the San Francisco Mime Troupe.



throws into relief one of the senses in which *communitas* contrasts with structure. *Communitas* is of the now; structure is rooted in the past and extends into the future through language, law, and custom' (113).

To help explain the greater complexity of *communitas* in industrial societies Turner's concept of the 'liminoid' is useful. Industrial societies have created permanent institutions which have liminal qualities, but which also have something of an autonomous quality, which Turner labels 'liminoid':

Technical innovations are the products of ideas, the products of which I will call the 'liminoid' (The 'oid' here derives from Greek-*eidos*, a form, shape; and means 'like, resembling'; 'liminoid' resembles without being identical with 'liminal') and what Marx assigned to a domain he called 'the superstructural' – I would prefer to talk about the 'anti-, 'meta-, or 'protostructural.' 'Superstructural,' for Marx, has the connotation of a distorted mirroring, even falsification or mystification of the 'structural' or 'infrastructural' which is, in his terms, the constellation of productive relations, both in cohesion and conflict. Contrarily, I see the 'liminoid' as an independent and critical source... 'Antistructure,' in fact, can generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behaviour of those in mainstream social and political roles (whether authoritative or dependent, in control or rebelling against it) in the direction of radical change, just as much as they can serve as instruments of political control'... Universities, institutes, colleges, etc., are 'liminoid' settings for all kinds of freewheeling, experimental cognitive behaviour... (1982: 32-33)

The changes that have taken place in the division of labour and productive relations in industrial societies mean that not only is there a separation between the concepts of work and play, there is also the novel concept of 'leisure', where people effectively labour at play. This includes an industry of entertainment, which takes in some, but not all, types of theatre. Turner notes that in regard to theatre, though its classical and 'legitimate' forms tend to reinforce existing rituals, even in modern industrial society, the 'supposedly' 'entertainment' genres of industrial society are often *subversive*, satirizing, lampooning, burlesquing, or subtly putting down the central values of the basic, work-sphere society' (1982: 41). Such subversive potential, in his view, is far from minor:

I would suggest that what have been regarded as the 'serious' genres of symbolic action – ritual, myth, tragedy, and comedy (at their 'birth') – are deeply implicated in the cyclical repetitive views of social process, while those genres which have flourished since the Industrial Revolution (the modern arts and sciences), though less serious in the eyes of the commonality (pure research, entertainment, interests of the elite), have had greater potential for changing the ways men relate to one another and the content of their relationships. Their influence has been more insidious. Because they are outside the arenas of direct industrial production, because they constitute the 'liminoid' analogues of liminal processes and phenomena in tribal and early agrarian societies, their very outsiderhood disengages them from direct functional action on the minds and behaviour of society's members (1974: 16)

While this concept seems germane to the role of radical theatre in the 1960s, which many of its adherents saw as deliberately subversive, the question remains as to how, precisely, the 'liminoid' is to be practised and where it stands in relation to *communitas*. Turner believes that in contrast to liminal phenomena, which tend to be collective, '*Liminoid phenomena may be collective* (and when they are so, are often directly derived from liminal antecedents) but are more characteristically individual products though they often have collective or "mass" effects' (1982: 54). By way of example, in *The Anthropology of Performance*

(1986) Turner cites both the Theatre of Cruelty and the Theatre of the Absurd of the 1950s and 60s as instances, worthy of greater study in his view, of the liminoid. Such theatres are the 'successor of the liminal in complex large-scale societies, where individuality and optation in art have supplanted collective and obligatory ritual performances' (29). The role of *communitas* is to bridge individual and collective experience:

Extreme individualism only understands a part of man. Extreme collectivism only understands man as a part. *Communitas* is the implicit law of wholeness arising out of our relation between totalities. But *communitas* is intrinsically dynamic, never quite being realized. It is not being realized precisely because individuals and collectives try to impose their cognitive schemata on one another (84).

Many of the radical theatrical experiments of the 1960s were, however, based primarily upon collective group work. It is important to try and determine a compatible vehicle for such de-individualised work. For this, Turner's 'social drama' and 'star group' concepts are useful, although as with Bion, these rest upon an inherently individualistic conception of the group. Turner's social dramas are contingent events, often based primarily upon upwellings of social conflict, and to that extent are different from Kenneth Burke's social dramatic 'pentad', or the quotidian social dramaturgy suggested by Goffman, where the individual presents or expresses a self before others, often a 'team' of others, who receive these as impressions and respond, accordingly, and tacitly, as if to a social script. However, like Goffman, Turner recognises the importance of verbal and non-verbal 'repertoires', both for groups and individuals:

Each culture, each person within it, uses the entire sensory repertoire to convey messages: manual gesticulations, facial expressions, bodily postures, rapid, heavy, or light breathing, dance patterns, prescribed silences, synchronized movements such as marching, the moves and 'plays' of games, sports, and rituals, at the cultural level. (1982: 9)

These 'dramas of living', as he notes Burke has called them, may be in response to minor oppositions or to major conflicts, but, regardless of scale they have four phases: breach; reconciliation or crisis; redressive action; and either reintegration or recognition of schism (69). It is important to note that for Turner, the social drama takes place within a group as well as between groups:

Social dramas occur within groups bounded by shared values and interests of persons and having a real or alleged common history. Their main actors are persons for whom the group which constitutes the field of dramatic action has a high priority value. (69)

He describes such groups, where the degrees of voluntary membership and emotional investment are high, as 'star' groups (others have used terms such as 'affinity' groups). Typically, he argues, an individual is a member of several groups at one time, some of which are star groups (e.g., hobby and sports clubs, voluntary organisations, study groups), and some of which are obligatory (e.g., family, age-set, professional associations). While noting that the star group often provides the greatest emotional reward for an individual, Turner also notes that the star group is not the same thing as an actual group of individuals: 'Now every objective group has members some of whom see it as their star group, while others may regard it with indifference, even dislike' (69). He characterises relations in the star group as often 'highly

ambivalent, resembling those among members of an elementary family group for which, perhaps, the star group is an adult substitute' (69).

The interesting point here, for the purposes of this study, is the degree to which in the countercultural milieu of the 1960s there was a widespread faith in the star group or affinity group as an actual group of individuals. This seems true of the Living Theatre, at least, which, as I argue in Chapter Four, regarded the group as a total community, and which appears to fit the following description by Turner:

(W)hen a group of liminoid artists constitutes itself as a coterie, it tends to generate its own admission rites, providing a liminal portal to its liminoid precinct, a portal, to throw in a liminal monster or two, guarded by three-headed dogs and flaming-sworded angels (1977: 46).

Leaving this point aside for the moment, it seems that there is a resemblance between the group dynamic of the star group and that of Bion's 'basic assumption' group:

They recognize one another's common attachment to the group, but are jealous of another over the relative intensity of that attachment or the esteem in which another member is held by the group as a whole. They may contend with each other for the incumbency of high office in the group, not merely to seek power but out of the conviction that they, and they alone, really understand the nature and value of the group and can altruistically advance its interests. In other words, we find symbolic equivalents of sibling rivalry and parent-child competition among 'star-groupers' (69).

The group process, for Turner, as noted above, is one of breach, crisis, redress, reintegration or recognition of schism. In Bion's basic-assumption group there is a tendency towards 'flight/fight' responses, particularly in regard to leadership. Often the group will look for a pair-bond within the group for reassurance about the health of the group. The group may or may not advance beyond flight and fight responses to 'unite' and to achieve actual task-related goals. Similarly, others suggest a typical, and relatively healthy, group process of forming, storming, norming, and performing on the path to a particular goal. Thus, like Bion, Kanter and other authors who have indicated that all group life has a strong social-emotional aspect Turner imputes to all group activity a subtext, whatever the overt purpose of a given group.

Returning to the concept of the actual star group of individuals, and if Turner's other claims are correct, the implications are interesting. One could propose that in the 1960s there was a very large liminal cohort, the baby boomers, who were steeped in a strong American 'antistructure' cultural tradition which, in keeping with a communalist heritage, legitimised the creation of society from within the liminal. This, combined with the appearance of several liminoid institutions that emerged as economic prosperity allowed a protracted dropping out from mainstream society into various countercultural and Movement organisations and causes, would have made for an extremely volatile set of circumstances. More than simply a 'hyper-liminal' moment in history these were, arguably, 'hyper-liminoid' times. The liminoid potential of the period was reinforced by a belief in star groups as actual groups, whether as a commune, the Black Panthers, an urban terrorist cell of the Weather Underground or a radical theatre. The liminoid star group

was highly self-referential but typically still held to ideals of radical egalitarianism and alternative social structures. In other words, and existential, normative and ideological *communitas* remained the background context for such star groups.

Summary and conclusion

Many radical theatres of the 1960s saw their broader mission in transformational or restorative terms, whether it was to restore an existential *communitas* in an open-ended sense or to reinvent a more ideologically coherent form of *communitas*. Importantly, such groups, if they wished to work as groups for any length of time, had to struggle with the normative dimension of *communitas*. This, it seems, created a dilemma: What to do with the concept of leadership, and the challenge to remove any distinction between public and private self, in a climate of liminoid, *communitas*-seeking egalitarianism or ultrademocracy, which attempted simultaneously to privilege the collective and the individual?

In order to understand how groups such as the Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group met these challenges a range of relatively simplified typologies, if not a general paradigm, needs to be set out. These can be based on the models proposed by Bion, Goffman, Kanter and Turner, where one would expect variations between the degrees of ambivalence about leadership, equality between members, barriers to entry, society at large and other factors. I have set these out in Table 2.2 below in terms of key attributes as they have emerged from the discussion in this chapter so far:

Table 2.2 Comparison of group models with key attributes

Group Type	Degree of voluntarism	Leadership attitude	Egalitarian beliefs	Need for group boundary	Attitude to larger society	Need for member 'authenticity'
Basic Assumption (Bion)	Low (often a therapeutic construction)	Highly ambivalent	Highly ambivalent	Low but increases as group 'ages'	Neutral	Low
Presentation Team (Goffman)	Low (contingent e.g. workplace entity)	Neutral	Neutral	Low	Neutral	Low
Commitment maintenance (Kanter)	High	Highly positive	Positive, but not anti-hierarchical	High	Hostile	Moderate
Liminoid star group (Turner)	High	Ambivalent	Ambivalent	High	Alienated	High

My rankings are subjective and imprecise, but such classifications yield, in my view, a useful heuristic tool. Following this type of classification it appears the group types share some, but not all, of the key attributes discussed. A basic assumption group, for example, appears less internally rule-bound than say a liminoid star group, but both are ambivalent about leadership and member equality. With the addition of typologies derived in Chapter Three, this table will be used for comparative purposes in the final chapter.

Current conceptions and definitions of group dynamics, balanced as they are in their attention to both task and social-emotional needs, offer limited assistance in understanding the group idea and ideal as it would have been constructed in the 1960s. The underlying group dynamic of the 1960s, if one can posit a general model, was one in which much greater space was opened up, both for social-emotional processes to unfold and for new, anti-structural social arrangements to emerge, however ephemeral they might prove to be. Because of this, one could argue that many groups would have resembled the clinical therapeutic groups run by W. R. Bion, being virtually empty of banal instrumental goals such as the production of a polished or refined commodity for consumption. Instead, they started more or less from the position of what it was to be a group. Similarly, the deliberate removal of psychic defences and avoidance of the types of social game-playing identified by Goffman would have been primary considerations. Furthermore, an overriding ethos, following Turner, was *communitas* and the crossing of thresholds of experience.

However, this new type of primary affinity or liminoid star group, with its rejection of fixed social roles and any retreat into a private self, together with its detachment from the structure of society, arguably created an extremely risky set of conditions. Such a large existential space may in effect have created a vacuum, one that in many cases may have been filled with more familiar familial experiences, creating a deep sense of ambiguity, and mirroring the negative tendencies within Bion's basic assumption group. Leadership was inherently problematic because of its frequent association with authoritarianism. In the absence of an unquestioned leadership figure, pair bonds were likely to be sought, giving the group a sense of parenting, or reproductive health. In the absence of a pair bond the group could escape into flights of fancy or turn on itself.

To make matters more risky, and in contrast to affinity groups of earlier periods, such as the utopian communes of the nineteenth century, the liminoid star group of the 1960s tended to operate without strong commitment maintenance practices, such as those identified by Kanter. Rules for membership were eschewed. There was less preoccupation with service to an external cause or opposing a defined force in society (other than the Establishment). The liminoid star group had an inherent, if not always activated, tendency towards inward-looking behaviour, without the safety of an external foe onto which anxieties could be routinely projected.

The liminoid star group of the 1960s, then, seems highly susceptible to becoming a therapy group. There has been a good deal of conjecture about the intellectual and cultural fads and fashions of the 1960s, including the attraction for psychoanalysis and therapy in groups. It might be described as a decade of 'encounter culture' as much as counterculture. Indeed, contemporary and subsequent written commentaries by and about members of the three theatre groups in this study frequently contain interpretive remarks about group and individual psychology (Shephard, 1991; Tytell, 1995). Shephard gives a participant account of the earliest incarnation of the Performance Group, rendered mainly as a phenomenological

reconstruction of experience, but which nevertheless relies heavily on Freud and Jung. Tytell charts Judith Malina's participation in individual and group psychotherapy and notes the occasions when the Living Theatre hosted guest speakers such as R.D. Laing and Joseph Campbell. One of the groups under study, the Performance Group, became involved in intensive group therapy during its *Dionysus in 69* phase. Judith Malina and Julian Beck, the founders of the Living Theatre, regularly socialised and consulted with gestalt psychologists, such as Paul Goodman, and psychotherapeutic 'thinkers' such as R.D. Laing, and Malina herself participated in group therapy under Goodman's auspices in the early 1950s. The San Francisco Mime Troupe, in contrast to many groups, seems to have assiduously avoided an analytic preoccupation with being a group in favour of more conventional task-related assumptions and concerns about the role of the group in wider society. In avoiding such a tendency, however, and suppressing the exploration and management of interpersonal conflict within the group, it seems to have left itself vulnerable in other ways, as is made apparent in Chapter Five.

Radical theatres, as putative liminoid star groups, played an important role in the social dramas of the 1960s. The 'anti-structure' they deployed in regard to theatre and everyday life was quite emphatic. Everything within Goffman's theatrical frame was antithetical, and therefore what was anti-theatrical was a good antithesis to the larger structure of society. The ways in which radical theatre groups such as the Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe and Performance Group attempted to lead the anti-structural charge equipped, as they were, with such a conflicted group paradigm, are discussed in separate chapters on the groups. The next chapter explores the politics of the group experience in the 1960s and the ways in which the counterculture influenced the group ideal.

## Chapter Three

### The politics of the group experience and countercultural influences on American radical theatre

#### Introduction

While it is important to try to develop general models of group function in order to understand how radical theatres of the 1960s operated, it is equally important to explore the politics of the decade for likely influences upon the group experience. In this chapter influences such as anarchism and the philosophies of the New Left, together with the general phenomenon of ultrademocracy or radical egalitarianism are examined. Some of the key, although less explicitly political, countercultural influences are also discussed, (a chronology outlining key political, theatrical and countercultural events of the 1950s and 1960s is contained in Appendix B). These overt politics and influences supplement and in some respects ramify, it is argued, the idea(l) of the group as discussed in the preceding chapter. The degree to which those involved in radical theatre groups in the 1960s would have been affected by these trends is considered.

#### The explicit politics of group experience in the 1960s

The discussion of the idea and ideal of the group in the 1960s as set out in the preceding chapter does not refer to any explicit political ideology or philosophy, such as libertarianism, anarchism, socialism, or communism, that may have been influential in America at that time. Instead there is the suggestion of underlying psychological and sociological patterns or currents of interaction for such groups. It is important to note, however, that while definitions of collectivity, the communal, and the collective tended to be conflated in the 1960s, and while *communitas* is perhaps a better term for the generational outlook, a number of radical theatre groups of the 1960s, including the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, aligned themselves with particular political philosophies.

For example, The Living Theatre had (and still has) an explicit commitment to anarchism, hence the mantra-like phrase uttered frequently by Julian Beck and other Living Theatre members in the 1960s about *Paradise Now*: 'The Revolution of which the play speaks is The Beautiful Non-Violent Anarchist Revolution' (Malina and Beck, 1971: 5). During the group's European sojourn from 1964 to 1968, the Living Theatre enjoyed some of its greatest support in anarchist and communist enclaves, particularly in Italy. The San Francisco Mime Troupe was very closely aligned with the American New Left in the mid-1960s, and there was a brief phase of overt Maoist communism in the early 1970s. This has given way to a

more moderate form of socialism in subsequent decades.<sup>1</sup> The Performance Group, while sympathetic to New Left ideals, did not align itself directly with any political organisation.

One of the difficulties, however, in attempting to correlate an adherence by a group to a particular political stance with the structure and decision-making processes of that group is that in the 1960s some of the distinctions between political stances were not always clear. Members of the New Left, for example, could embrace anarchism, communism, socialism, and a libertarian individualism all at once. Furthermore, the politics of the counterculture often seemed opaque, as if people were unwilling to attach themselves to any recognisably political position or institution. Some commentators have seen the American New Left as distinct from the New Left in other countries, especially when considering its connection to Marxist thought. McClellan (1979) argues:

In the United States, however - and here there is a difference from the situation in the United Kingdom - Marxism was not organically linked to the working class and tended, in its New Left form, to become the vehicle of protests for all oppressed minorities. Traditional Marxists of the Old Left rejected the New Left's sceptical humanism, its moralism, individualism, idealism, its vaguely 'existentialist' stances which they associated more with anarchy than with class-based social and political analyses of Marxism. The increasingly anti-industrial, ecological bias of the New Left (in particular generated by sympathy for the Third World) seemed to the Old Left to be both romantic and reactionary. The unconventional life-style encouraged by the New Left - drugs, permissive sex, etc., - were seen as distractions from serious political commitment. (318)

Teodori (1970) sees non-alignment in the American New Left as a carefully considered choice. He contrasts the founding of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960 with other established, more conservative, civil rights groups such as the Campaign on Racial Equality (CORE) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC):

The novelty in SNCC lay in the completely open and flexible nature of its organization, in its lack of a fixed bureaucracy, in the democratic participation in both decision-making process an action on the part of its organizer-members, and in its refusal to operate as the bearer of ideology for the people to whom its activities were directed. (14)

The organising activities and organisational structures of groups such as the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), SNCC, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), the Berkeley Free Speech Movement (FSM), were similar in that they all adhered to principles of 'participatory democracy'. Teodori describes the practice of participatory democracy as follows:

Participatory democracy then seems, in its application, to correspond to the old concept of self-government, enlarged to take in every expression of communal life, in all its organized moments. The principle seems more like a political philosophy than an ideology, more like a method for inspiring political action in an experiential way than a systematic plan for the society of the future. In practice, the new radicals' attempt has been to realize in the present those social relationships and values of participation which they uphold as parameters of the organization of tomorrow's

<sup>1</sup> Its structure as a theatrical group is currently described in the following terms: 'The San Francisco Mime Troupe is a worker-owned company, headed by a collective: a dozen poly-talented people who steer the artistic direction of the company and also hire the fulltime business staff (of three), [sic] A collective member, [sic] might be an actor who is also a costume designer and flute player, or a technician who is also a writer and building manager' <http://www.sfmt.org/faq/list.html> 'Who is your artistic director?'



society; countercommunities, parallel institutions, and alternative structures to capitalism and bureaucracy represent their effort to bring about through action a synthesis between utopia and the existing reality. (50)

This description to some extent resolves the apparent contradiction between the New Left and the counterculture, particularly 'drop-out' phenomena such as rural communes. What unites the different groups is both a belief in a primarily experiential approach to countercommunities, and the expansion of the participation principle to include all aspects of communal life. In other words, there was a widespread belief in the merging of the personal and the political, the private and the public, or the 'back-stage' and the 'front', to use Goffman's terminology.

Despite the relative coherence of belief, practical guidelines for participatory democracy within the new experiential countercommunities and parallel institutions rarely seem to have been specified in the 1960s. The Port Huron Statement of 1962, a widely-disseminated charter of intent, drafted by Students for a Democratic Society, stresses co-operation and fellowship, but it is principally a reassertion of humanistic ideals rather than an action plan or template for the organisation of groups. The norms of participatory democracy that evolved in the 1960s can, however, be deduced, and they extend well beyond conventional liberal democratic principles of decision-making found in representative democracies:

- consensus agreement before majority rule;
- systematic turn-taking in discussion rather than leaving it to the loudest voice;
- rotation of, and continuous reassessment of, leadership roles, or power-sharing of top positions rather than rule by individuals with executive power over long periods;
- transparency of communication rather than concealment; and
- constant safeguards against discrimination on the grounds of class, ethnicity or gender rather than a weak assumption that equal opportunity is always available.

These principles, many of which have become enshrined in social policies, seem now to be almost self-evidently correct. Current conceptions of the ideal group or collective, such as that outlined by Weinberg when discussing the 'center' (as information clearing-house available to all members) as the critical feature in an ideal people's theatre, would take such principles as axiomatic.

Yet in the 1960s, in America at least, the ideal of participatory democracy seems to have hypertrophied into an ultrademocratic ideal. Turner's general characterisation of industrial societies as liminoid, rather than liminal, suggests that there was a major historical liminoid moment of detachment from the structure of society. There was greater room for experimentation than in liminal pre-industrial societies. Ultrademocracy, one could argue, was a luxury that many young middle-class white Americans could afford in the 1960s.

In trying to understand this ultrademocratic shift attention also needs to be paid to what appears to be a distinctive conception of the 'collective' in America at this time. Historically, the term 'collective' has been associated principally with control over the fruits of labour, as the definition given in Chapter Two indicates. Marshall (1992), in tracing the history of anarchism, which, in his view, can be detected in a vast array of philosophical traditions, including Taoism and Buddhism, distinguishes 'collectivism' from 'communism':

Collectivists in general look to a free federation of associations of producers and consumers to organize production and distribution. They uphold the socialist principle: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to work done'. This form of anarchist collectivism appealed to peasants as well as workers in the labour movement who wanted to create a free society without any transitional revolutionary government or dictatorship. For a long time after Bakunin, nearly all the Spanish anarchists were collectivists.

After the demise of the First International in the 1870s the European anarchist movement took a communist direction. At first the distinction between communism and collectivism was not always readily apparent [...] Nevertheless, anarchist communists came to believe, like Kropotkin, that the products of labour as well as the instruments of production should be held in common. [...] Where collectivists see the workers' collective as the basic unit of society, communists look to the commune composed of the whole population – consumers as well as producers – as the fundamental association. They adopt as their definition of economic justice the principle: 'From each according to their ability, to each according to their need'. (8)

In America, Kropotkin's anarchist communism, virulently opposed to any notions of state communism as sanctioned by Marx and Lenin, appears to have informed the concept of the 'collective' to a significant degree. Marshall outlines Kropotkin's image of pre-industrial society before the emergence of the coercive state apparatus:

In tracing the origins of the State, Kropotkin still maintains that human societies originally were based on human aid. Man lived in clans or tribes before the founding of the patriarchal family, and did not accumulate private property. Tribal morality was kept alive by usage, custom, and tradition only, not imposed by authority. During the course of migrations, the early tribes settled down and formed federated village communities of individual families but with communal ownership of land. In Europe, from the twelfth century on, associations called guilds formed for mutual support. From the village community and the guilds emerged the commune or free city of the Middle Ages, which struggled for federative principles and the liberty of the individual citizen. This for Kropotkin, in his idealized version of history, amounts to the high point of European history thus far. (323-24)

This paradigm of the original village community is not radically different from that of Marx when he charts the transition from pre-industrial to industrial society and the gradual alienation of collectivity from the individual. Marx, in contrast to Kropotkin and others, did not regard retransformation as possible.

While New Leftists agreed with many aspects of Marxist analysis, something of a 'folk community' paradigm, such as that set out by Kropotkin, appears to have filtered through into New Left thought in the 1960s, assisted by theorists such as C. Wright Mills, Herbert Marcuse, Paul Goodman, and Murray Bookchin. Mills revised Marxism both by opposing the notion of a 'power elite' to the class model and by

stressing the role of the military-industrial complex in American society. Marshall notes the role of critical theorist Herbert Marcuse:

The German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse offered a highly libertarian analysis of the failings of Soviet Marxism. Recognizing with Freud that 'civilization has progressed as organized domination', he called in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) for the release of the forces of repression and the eroticisation of culture. (541)

Goodman's brand of anarchist communism, although not original, had a significant impact on the counterculture, if not the New Left directly. He was playwright-cum-philosophical adviser to the Living Theatre in the 1950s. In Marshall's opinion: 'His advocacy of anti-militarism, radical decentralization, participatory democracy, and organic community also deeply influenced the Counterculture at the time' (597).

Interestingly, both Goodman, notably in *Growing up Absurd* (1960), and Marcuse, in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *One-Dimensional Man* (1955), stress the violence done to the psychology of the individual, after Freud, by civilised society. They preserve at all times the sanctity of the individual. This type of anarchist thought, an individualist anarchism, albeit non-acquisitive or non-capitalistic, was already a well-established American intellectual tradition in the 1960s, particularly through the influence of Henry David Thoreau, whose *Walden: or, Life in the Woods* (1854), was a seminal text for many in the 1960s. Such an emphasis on individual liberty and a commitment, at the same time, to the ideal of collectivity, however problematic, seems to be the essence of American ultrademocracy.

It is not difficult to see how this type of anarchist thought, underscored by a libertarian influence, could yield a group paradigm consistent with that proposed in Chapter Two which synthesises Bion's basic assumption conditions, Goffman's frame-breaking impetus, and Turner's liminoid star group. The group, under both constructions, is attractive insofar as it promises communitas, yet it is also threatening, since for those otherwise alienated from collectivity, individual autonomy has a strong normative standing; the group as a whole and/or a leadership figure within the group may compromise such autonomy. Typically, the latter concern remains relatively latent, as an idea, except, perhaps, when articulated as the right to 'do your own thing' while the former is expressed clearly as an ideal.

An exemplar of American anarchist thought and the group ideal in the 1960s can be found in the writings of Murray Bookchin, in particular *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971). Bookchin was a friend of Judith Malina and Julian Beck in the 1960s, and members of the Living Theatre attended lectures by Bookchin in New York in the early 1970s (Tytell, 1995: 307, 314). According to Marshall (1992):

Bookchin proposes the 'affinity group' as a revolutionary cell and the fundamental unit of the new society. Translated from the Spanish *grupo de afinidad*, a term used earlier this century by the Spanish anarchists for their form of organization, Bookchin defines it as 'a collective of intimate friends who are no less concerned with their human relationships than with their social goals'. Indeed, it is a 'new type of extended family in which kinship ties are replaced by deeply empathic

relationships'. Such a group overcomes the split between the psyche and the social world, and is based on voluntarism and self-discipline, not coercion and command. It should affirm not only the rational, but also the joyous, the sensuous, and the aesthetic side of the revolution. (617)

This is as much to say that the open-ended group experience, free of conventional family or social obligations, is paramount. Under these conditions there are no proscriptions on self-exploration and self-expression, whether consciously pursued, perhaps in therapeutic outpourings in a group or individually, or through experimentation with new forms of experience. The group is largely self-referential, deriving its legitimacy from within, but it assumes, and tries to preserve, a radical egalitarianism.

A succinct, if not particularly enlightening, articulation of a combined idea and ideal of the group can be found in the revolutionary rhetoric of the Living Theatre. The introductory statements in the group's book version of *Paradise Now* contain the following: 'The Revolution seeks to establish a State of Being of Interdependence between the Individual and the Collective, in which the Individual is not sacrificed to the Collective nor the Collective to the Individual' (Malina and Beck, 1971: 7). As I argue in the next chapter, the Living Theatre earnestly attempted to embody this on stage, often with mixed results, and off stage as well.

Marshall and others hold reservations about the coherence of anarchist thought, and indeed any adapted political philosophy or ideology such as Marxism and Maoism, or the 'third world' revolutionary guerrilla philosophy of, say, Ché Guevara, in the New Left and the counterculture in America in the 1960s. Nevertheless, anarchist thought in America produced groups such as the San Francisco Diggers, an outgrowth of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, as Doyle (1997) illustrates in his doctoral thesis on the former. The group took its name from the English Diggers of 1649, who, led by Gerrard Winstanley, famously attempted to establish a food-growing collective on wasteland on George's Hill, Surrey in defiance of State and Church. The San Francisco Diggers also modelled themselves on the French Situationists of the early 1960s and the Dutch Provos of the mid-1960s. Indeed, the San Francisco Diggers, the Yippies, led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin (both of whom borrowed heavily from the American Diggers for their tactics and rhetoric), and even Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, who, with their psychedelic schoolbus 'Furthur', created a travelling anarchist embassy in 1964, can be seen as relatively sincere proponents of what Stephens (1998) terms 'anti-disciplinary protest'.

Some social commentators have seen this ultrademocratic ethos in the 1960s as one of the most lamentable, if not harmful, developments of the decade. Public policy analyst Aaron Wildavsky argues in *Radical Egalitarianism* (1995) that it has caused immeasurable harm to America's standing in the world today. Daniel Bell, writing in the mid-1970s, and extending his 'end of ideology' thesis of the 1950s, contrasts notions of 'wholesale egalitarianism' with what he views as the best compromise for modern democracies,

a 'just meritocracy'. In his view, there is the misapprehension that authority is equivalent to authoritarianism under radically egalitarian conditions:

Power is the ability to command, which is backed up, either implicitly or explicitly, by force. That is why power is the defining principle of politics. Authority is a competence based upon skill, learning, talent, artistry or some similar attribute. Inevitably it leads to distinctions between those who are superior and those who are not. A meritocracy is made up of those who have earned their authority. An unjust meritocracy is one which makes these distinctions invidious and demeans those below.

Contemporary populism, in its desire for wholesale egalitarianism, insists in the end on complete levelling. It is not for *fairness*, but against *elitism*; its impulse is not justice but *ressentiment*. The populists are for power ('to the People') but against authority – the authority represented in the superior competence of individuals. Since they lack authority, they want power. In the populist sociology, for example, the authority of the doctors should be subject to the decisions of a community council, and that of professors to the entire collegiate body (which in the extreme versions include the janitors). (1976a: 453)

Bell also believes that the political and cultural radicalism of the 1960s adds a new and unwelcome sensibility to modernist traditions in art. It sanctions:

A concern with violence and cruelty; a preoccupation with the sexually perverse; a desire to make noise; an anti-cognitive and anti-intellectual mood; an effort once and for all to erase the boundary between 'art' and 'life'; and a fusion of art and politics. (1976b: 121)

Bell has a particularly gloomy view of radical theatres of the 1960s as purveyors of this sensibility:

Nowhere was the apocalyptic mood acted out more tirelessly than in the movement which called itself the 'Dionysiac theater,' and which regarded the acting troupe as a kind of Dionysiac pack. Its main emphasis was on spontaneity, on orgiastic release, on sensory communication, on Eastern mysticism and ritual; its intention, unlike that of the older radical theater, was not to change the ideas of the audience so much as to reconstruct the psyches of both audience and actors through joint participation in ceremonies of liberation. (139-40)

Although the label 'Dionysiac theater' appears to be his own nomenclature, Bell almost certainly derives this terminology from awareness, if not direct experience, of the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* (1968), which was in fact more circumspect in its examination of the Dionysian and the Apollonian than Bell allows. He also cites the Living Theatre as an exemplar of this new sensibility:

After traveling in Europe for several years, the troupe evolved a new style of random action and preached a form of revolutionary anarchism. Their new credo was that 'the theater must be set free' and 'taken into the street'. (140)

For Bell, then, American radical theatres of the 1960s are deeply implicated in the unproductive levelling of art and culture:

In the United States of the 1960s, where the children of the affluent played, sometimes fatally, at revolution, and toyed, sometimes fatally, with hallucination, it was inevitable that theories of those like Artaud's 'Theater of Cruelty' would become fashionable without ever being really understood. For in all the talk which went on during this period about the theater as ritual, there was a curious sense of emptiness, lack of conviction, and sheer theatricality. (141)

The views of Bell and Wildavsky are clearly partisan. Both oppose participatory democracy and offer an apologia for a meritocratic foundation for society, ignoring or downplaying both the emancipatory (civil rights) and crisis-response (Vietnam) context of ultrademocratic experimentation in the 1960s, which may have shaped democratic policies and practices in subsequent decades, and which neither author would reject. They also imply that there was no awareness of the pitfalls of ultrademocracy and the extra demands made on people's time and patience. To the contrary, there can be little doubt that many of those who followed ultrademocratic principles felt frustrated by their counterproductive aspects, but, having made a commitment to follow due process, it was no doubt also felt that it was important to see the experiment through to some sort of conclusion.

This being said, the conflation, noted by Bell, of authority with authoritarianism in the 1960s, cannot be dismissed. Radical theatre groups were clearly diffident about leadership in the late 1960s. In the case of the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance this confusion contributed to their atomisation as groups. Before moving to the groups themselves it is important to acknowledge some of the other socio-cultural and political pressures being exerted at the time.

### **Countercultural influences on American radical theatre**

One of the most obvious influences was the hippie commune, which, as Kanter (1972) notes, was much less closed and formally organised than other traditional American communes. While I will not dwell upon the countercultural or hippie commune phenomenon in general, it is important to allow for more than a marginal impact upon American society. Authors such as Jerome, in *Families of Eden* (1974), have argued that there were many more communes than the apocryphal figure of 2-3000 widely reported in the media, and that a commune typically numbered six to eight persons. He claims that the media estimate, usually based only on a small geographic area, has been perpetuated uncritically by authors such as Fairfield (1972), Houriet (1971), Kanter and others (16-17). His own calculations for the early 1970s are approximately 25,000 secular urban small communes, and many large religious or creedal communes in cities, yielding a total of nearly half a million people living communally in cities. Rural communes account for another 250,000 people at least. By Jerome's calculations a conservative estimate is three quarters of a million people or 0.3 percent of the total American population at that time (1974: 13-18).

Several authors have studied communes as legitimate social units e.g., Gardner (1978: 21-31), Hostetler (1974), Moos and Brownstein (1977), Zablocki (1980), and Zicklin (1983: 66-72). These authors tend to confirm Kanter's findings about the looser structure of countercultural communes compared with past communal experiments. Gardner takes Kanter's theory and applies it to a larger set of contemporary communes, drawing similar conclusions. Zablocki (1980) provides a highly empirical study of some 120

communes, concentrating on the period 1965-1975 (which he regards as a bona fide historical era in American history), but has extensive discussion of the 'Distribution of Communitarian Movements' (Europe) and a section entitled 'A Venerable American Tradition.' For Zablocki success revolves around interacting levels of alienation, charisma, and investment of self. In consonance with both Kanter, and Fitzgerald (1986), he finds American communes uniquely disposed towards the radical reinvention of social arrangements. Richter (1971) devotes a chapter to 'Why Utopias Fail: A survey and an example, Morning Star' (148-69), which mirrors some of Kanter's observations.

It is worth noting that the Living Theatre existed, for all intents and purposes, as a homeless hippie commune between the years 1965 and 1970, and that many members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe of the late 1960s lived in communal households. The Performance Group, although it did not live communally, created a work specifically entitled *Commune* (1970/1). In this instance the word acts both as a noun and a verb. The play references actual communes while at the same time exploring what it means to commune as an action. The widespread positive associations around the idea of the countercultural commune no doubt added a layer of meaning to the group idea(l) of the 1960s, even if there was no received single formula for the organisation of such an entity, as many of the above studies show. If nothing else, it legitimated 'groupishness', and would have reinforced the notion of the group as an open existential space. Similarly, some of the more extreme practices of indoctrination that developed in some countercultural communes, which often seems to have had the effect of coercion and victimisation, rather than emancipation, of certain members, may also have been implicitly sanctioned within the general group paradigm. In the case of the Performance Group, at least, there appears to have been an element of this persecutory behaviour.

A number of other themes or factors within the counterculture can be identified: the Beat connection; seminal texts; sexual and bodily freedom; drug culture; rock groups; Orientalism; Vietnam; the Charles Manson phenomenon; and the Weather Underground. Also, radical theatre groups themselves have probably helped to shape the counterculture.

#### The Beat connection

Unger and Unger (1988) claim that the 'Beats were the direct ancestors of the counterculture' (372). Although much of the literature of the Beat Generation belongs to the 1950s rather than the 1960s, it clearly had an impact on what some have called the 'rucksack generation'. If the Beat poets did not promote, say, rural communes as an idea themselves, they seem to have defined the main mode of travel for getting to them i.e., hitch-hiking, and long-distance journeys by car. The camaraderie of the road was something of a collective ideal. Specific information on how to be a group is less evident. For example, the characters

created by Jack Kerouac in *On the Road* (1957), *The Subterraneans* (1958), and *The Dharma Bums* (1958) are often depicted as alienated individuals seeking authentic experiences in relatively solitary or isolated ways, whether through road journeys, working for the railroad, mountain retreats, or the seedier offerings of city life. Yet Kerouac also writes about the bonds of friendship, and about groups of friends. It is possible to see how such affinity groups could provide something of a prototype for the new families of the 1960s.<sup>2</sup>

It took others, however, to synthesise the 'groupishness' Kerouac might have celebrated, as Kerouac himself had very little time for hippies, whom he regarded as unpatriotic. He was uncomfortable with efforts to align the Beat Generation with the counterculture, and uncomfortable in the presence of most of the new young acolytes. A palpable link between Kerouac and the counterculture came in the form of Neal Cassady, a close friend of Kerouac's and the model for the character Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*. Cassady seemed much more receptive to the mood of experimentation in the 1960s, and his meeting circa 1963 with Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), and an avid fan of Kerouac's writings, produced the definitive countercultural adaptation of the cross-country road trip. Instead of hitchhiking in ones or twos, or travelling in a single carload, the preferred mode became a group of friends travelling together in a large, customised, mobile dwelling. Kesey, Cassady, Ken Babbs, and a group of friends got together (dubbing themselves the 'Merry Pranksters') and purchased an old school bus (which they decorated psychedelically and named 'Furthur' or 'Further' depending on source – pictures of the bus show the spelling as 'Furthur'). In this vehicle they went cross-continent from San Francisco to New York in the summer of 1964 on the pretext of attending the launch of Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion*, but also to visit Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert at the Millbrook community, and to pay homage to a recalcitrant Kerouac in Northport, Connecticut.

This event, and other Merry Prankster actions, such as LSD dissemination by way of large dance benefits in the Bay Area ('Trips Festivals' and 'Acid Tests'), in which the San Francisco Mime Troupe occasionally participated, became immortalised in Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968) and other underground reportage. The important thing was to experiment in groups, not alone. The loosely grouped non-conformist friends of the Beat era became the twenty-four-hour travelling tribe of the 1960s. Interestingly, at least one radical theatre group was experimenting along the same lines at exactly the same time. When the Living Theatre went to Europe in 1964, the group's mode of travel across the Continent for the next four years was not a single bus, but a caravan of Volkswagen Kombis (or Microbuses as they were referred to in American parlance at the time). A similar approach was used when they toured America in 1968-69, even though this meant driving in winter road conditions for much of the journey.

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<sup>2</sup> The misogynistic and homophobic aspects of Kerouac's writings have attracted attention since his death in 1969 but they went largely unexamined in the 1950s and 1960s.



Beat poets like Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder seem to have made an easy transition into the counterculture, both in print and in person. Indeed, Ginsberg could be seen as the countercultural envoy *par excellence*, appearing at key countercultural events, from being crowned King of the May in Prague in 1965, to the Human Be-In in San Francisco and the Dialectics of Liberation Conference in London in 1967, to the Yippie 'youth festival' in Chicago in 1968. Similarly, Snyder was invited to many events, and along with Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Lew Welch, he became involved in a number of countercultural initiatives in the Bay Area during the 1960s. In terms of radical theatre connections, Ginsberg had appeared at poetry readings at the Living Theatre's Fourteenth Street theatre in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and supported the Living Theatre on several occasions.

#### Seminal texts of the 1960s

Beyond various types of literature associated specifically with the Beat generation, many important texts, authors, films, songs, and magazine publications took hold during the 1960s. These include so-called talismanic works such as Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), Timothy Leary's *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964), and *The Politics of Ecstasy* (1968), Chairman Mao Tse Tung's *Quotations from Chairman Mao* aka *Mao's Little Red Book* (1967), the *I-Ching*, Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1967), Malcolm X's *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), R.D. Laing's *The Politics of Experience* (1967), Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964), Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* (1959), Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* (1955), and *Eros and Civilization* (1955). A plethora of underground or alternative press publications that served what was known loosely as 'the Movement', such as *The Berkeley Barb*, *The Oracle*, *The East Village Other*, *The Rat*, *Fifth Estate*, *Ramparts*, *Great Speckled Bird*, *Los Angeles Free Press*, *Win*, and English publications *OZ* and *IT* (*International Times*) were also influential.

A number of authors have suggested that key texts, particularly monographs such as those by Laing, Marcuse, and Leary, were important influences on radical theatres (Bigsby, 1985: 10; Rieser, 1982; Ronen, 1976: 82-101). However, as Gardner (1978: 16) cautions, in his study of selected communes, the impact of literary works and works of non-fiction in the 1960s can be easily overstated. Instead, he argues that self-starting discussion groups, or 'free universities', and music, film, and other media influences were much more important, citing films such as *Easy Rider* (1969) as a key trigger for the spate of communes in the Taos area of New Mexico in the 1970s (18). Anti-intellectualism, as other commentators on American communal traditions such as Frances Fitzgerald have noted, is an entrenched and respectable American tradition:

Sidney Mead, the great authority on the American Protestant tradition, wrote in *The Lively Experiment* that evangelical Protestantism was characterized by an emphasis on direct experience rather than knowledge of doctrine or ritual practice, and, as a consequence, by anti-intellectualism, ahistoricism, and a pragmatic experimentalism. (1986: 388)

Also, one could argue that if radical theatres were non-literary in their approaches to making theatre, then it is unlikely that the members of such groups would have discriminated only against the playwright in their attitudes to text. In other words, although text was not rejected entirely in the 1960s, entire works and individual authors may not have held the authoritative status that is commonly assumed will hold for literature. In keeping with the idea of the 'combine generation' (Gruen, 1990), it is likely that a large amount of 'cutting and pasting' of ideas from a number of sources took place.

Even if members of radical theatres were 'bookish' by general standards and did read books from cover to cover, the types of literature just listed, although inspirational, did not give much by way of guidance on the specifics of being a group or doing group work. For example, McLuhan, Marcuse, Leary, and Laing may critique modern society, and either implicitly or explicitly endorse the idea of the 'tribe', but they do not lay out the protocols for the creation and maintenance of new families or groups.

Laing (1967), perhaps the greatest critic of the nuclear family and its role in shaping the schizophrenic individual, discusses the problematics of group life in terms of 'We, Them, and Us', and describes 'nexal families' which need to reinforce the terror of dissolution in order to survive (65-83). However, he concentrates most on dysfunctional or constricted group relations in this and other works, notably *The Politics of the Family* (1969), and does not offer a new functional group paradigm. Interestingly, Laing himself was a friend of the Living Theatre and visited the group on a number of occasions while, in turn, some of the members attended his lectures.

Marcuse is arguably the most notable countercultural author. His critique of modern society, a synthesis of Marx and Freud, was bound to appeal, suggesting that through the reassertion of libidinal desires, through Eros, individuals could avoid being reduction to a one-dimensional existence, despite the capacity of capitalism to absorb, disarm, and commodify the erotic.

In any case, writers such as Marcuse, Laing, and Leary gave directions to areas for experimentation that might contribute to heightened group consciousness, if not clear ideas about group structure. In this respect, the triad of 'sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll', so frequently associated with the 1960s as a throwaway remark, takes on more meaning in terms of how these three dimensions reinforced the group ethos.

### Sexual and bodily freedom

The sexual revolution of the 1960s focussed attention on the body as a source of pleasure. This was true whether one saw it in terms of Marcuse's interpretation of this trend as a response to a modern, de-eroticised 'repressive desublimation' of sexuality, or as a genuine liberation of sexual and erotic taboos,

The revolution was no doubt assisted by the widespread availability of the contraceptive pill from the late 1950s onwards. The new permissiveness would have influenced ideas about groups in general insofar as it encouraged the freer exchange of physical experience without recourse to rules, intellectualisation, and, in some cases, verbal communication at all. Thanks to tacit endorsements by researchers such as Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson, and an influx of Eastern literature on sexual practices, it became widely acceptable, for a time at least, to pursue sexual relationships based principally on physical attraction.

In extreme situations any withholding of sexual behaviour, especially in the form of exclusive monogamous marriage, was seen as anti-social. The status of exclusive pair bonds was often a major issue for communes of the 1960s, as it had been in earlier communal eras, although there was much greater tolerance for such partnerships than is often assumed. In the most extreme Maoist-inspired groups, notably the Weather Underground, and, as many women found, in the various 'emancipatory' Movement organisations, including SDS and Black Power, any bourgeois 'pair bonds', or refusal to acquiesce to sex on demand with their male 'brothers', could lead to criticism, sanctions, and in some cases severe beatings (Powers, 1971). Group marriages were sometimes regarded as a legitimate compromise in less dogmatic groups, but often it was simply a matter of accepting, as a matter of philosophical unity, that one should share one's body more readily with those with whom one shared core values.

Radical theatres seem to have been affected by the climate of sexual freedom to the extent that 'nakedness', if not actual sexual activity, was deemed appropriate for on-stage performances. Often this involved using the naked body to affirm the group visibly by combining bodies in sculptural ways, either as one large sculpture, or in pairs. Similar configurations took place in dance. In both performance forms the sheer act of appearing without clothes in public at a time when most members of the public remained clothed in and of itself showed 'groupishness' by exposing the bodily ordinariness and similarity of individuals, as if to say 'Remove your clothes and you are all part of one universal group'. Indeed, many radical theatre performances encouraged the audience to reclaim its universal group membership by disrobing and joining the cast on stage. The use of nakedness in this way did not signal promiscuity. Without completely desexualising the body it encouraged people to think of nakedness as a natural state of being.

However, in some cases, and this includes the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* and the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now*, the invitation to join the nude performers on stage was extended to include physical caresses and sexual intimacy. In the case of the Performance Group, such audience participation experiments quickly showed that many male audience members were often too interested in exploiting the gratuitous sexual opportunities of the moment, and the practice was abandoned. With the Living Theatre it was a different matter. In fact, of all the radical theatre groups of the 1960s the Living Theatre, as noted in Chapter Four, seems to have gone the farthest in making open sexuality a constitutional aspect of the group's life.

### Drug culture

While debate continues as to the good or harm produced by drugs, particularly 'mind-altering' drugs such as marijuana and LSD, it is clear that such drugs were seen in the counterculture as a means to achieving authentic experience as much as a means of escape. Drug-taking generally involved a socially interactive rather than a solitary process, and proponents such as Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert set up a communal retreat for the League of Spiritual Discovery for the purposes of bringing groups together for common psychedelic experiences. Similarly, Acid Tests, Trips Festivals, and the Be-Ins of the Summer of Love were predicated upon taking drugs as a group experience. A 'bad trip' for an individual in a group context at least provided a measure of safety for that person, and it took a certain amount of common trust to take these psychic risks so openly, especially if against the law (LSD possession and sale were criminalised in America in 1966).

Clinical observations of drug users tended to confirm a greater, rather than lesser, sense of the social whole. Whether in laboratory settings or commenting informally, users reported an 'ego-dissolving' experience, however temporary, when taking these drugs, which helped them to feel more at one with the universe and its fellow inhabitants. Corny though this may sound, it is not difficult to see how well this would have sat, at least in principle, if not always in practice, with groups of people engaged in radical egalitarian experiments. Marijuana, in particular, tends to divert people from 'power trips' towards a non-competitive outlook, which, in a group, can be constructive or obstructive, depending upon the amount of task work required.

It is also clear that drug-taking was a relatively widespread phenomenon amongst the younger generation. Unger and Unger argue that Ginsberg, Kesey, Leary, and Alpert, almost by themselves engendered a popular psychedelic revolution on the West and East coasts. To think, therefore, that radical theatre groups of the 1960s were not influenced by psychotropic drugs would be naïve. Groups like the Living Theatre deliberately turned the liberating and communally sacramental virtues of drugs, and the fascism of drug laws, into political and performance issues, particularly in *Paradise Now*. And although the San Francisco Mime Troupe did not celebrate narcotics, or rail against drug penalties in its shows, many of its members lived in the Haight-Ashbury district up to and at the time of the Summer of Love (January to September 1967), and the Mime Troupe participated very visibly in several psychedelic events. All three theatre groups were 'busted' for drugs at various times, almost always on minor charges for possession of marijuana.

### Rock groups as group model

The direct impact of the 'pop' or 'rock' group phenomenon upon radical theatres, particularly in the wake of the Beatles, is a matter of speculation, but there are features worth noting. In concrete terms rock bands showed that a very small group could create a very large sound or effect. Also, the rock ensembles, at least by outward appearance, altered the leader-plus-backing-band structure of music groups that had characterised the early rock and roll units, and which had underlain even the more improvisational jazz combos. It was difficult to tell who the real leader was, if any. The visual group image and the group sound became interwoven. Groups adopted similar clothes and hairstyles. Recordings and live performances were deliberately 'dense'; it was often difficult to separate out individual sounds and playing in rock music. Some psychedelic rock groups, notably San Francisco's Grateful Dead (who played free gigs for the San Francisco Mime Troupe on more than one occasion), went so far as to live communally, very publicly making their house on Ashbury Street a symbol of their total togetherness as a group.

In keeping with Artaud's philosophy, rock music, in contrast to folk music, protest music, and to a certain extent, pop music, put less emphasis on 'the word', and more emphasis on the beat and the spectacle. The new music was made as much for dancing, making love, and taking drugs as it was for telling stories. And whereas in the past it was acceptable for recording artists and performers to fill their repertoires with the works of others, the principle of 'collective creation' was paramount in many rock groups in the 1960s. Furthermore, the concept of the rock concert, with hundreds of thousands of people in attendance, reinforced the notion of the amorphous group experience as a ritual of communion, creating a group much larger than the performers.

### Orientalism

Said (1978) has written extensively on what he refers to as 'Orientalism' in the Occident, which he regards both as an act of appropriation for cultural amusement and economic gain, and as a tool for Western cultures to reduce the potential threat of those from the East. The latter is achieved either by explaining it away, or 'inventing' the East, typically in the form of history books, scholarly texts, and the establishment of specialised university departments, so that the West has intellectual authority over the East, or, in the public domain, by outright demonisation, subtle undermining, and other linguistic tactics in the media.

Although Said dwells less upon the counterculture, and more upon 'scholarship', Stephens (1998) finds that the 'Orientalist' idea applies well to the counterculture. In a chapter entitled 'Consuming India', singling out the country that seemed, in the 1960s, to be the quintessence of all things good from the East for many

young Westerners, she notes the mixture of awe and cynicism that informed the attitudes of those that travelled there:

As far as was practical, 'hippie' travellers to India during the decade studiously tried to ignore the rules and regulations governing tourists and Indian citizens alike. Certain 'Indian' conventions and customs were taken up as acceptable to follow, while many others were scorned. (63)

As Stephens notes, this meant that even payment for goods and services from street vendors could be optional and quotes Richard Neville's remark in *Playpower* that he 'learned to say "I have no money," in seven different languages' (70). She argues that living as cheaply as possible, even if one's host was extremely poor, was, as it remains in mainstream culture today, part of the intercultural contest surrounding barter, which, it was presumed, everybody enjoyed no matter how many mouths they might have to feed.

Stephens also discusses the appropriation of aspects of Eastern cultures for use in Western countercultural lifestyles and events (clothes, incense, sitar music, mantras, yogic communes) and in countercultural literature (the poetry of Ginsberg and Snyder, Leary and Alpert's *The Politics of Experience*). Indeed, Ginsberg, who became the official unofficial spokesperson for the counterculture during the 1960s, had no qualms about cutting and pasting several different cultural references in his vision of the imminent utopian future:

I am not proposing idealistic fantasies, I am acknowledging what is already happening among the young in fact and fantasy, and proposing official blessing for these breakthroughs of community spirit. Among the young we find a new breed of White Indians in California communing with illuminated desert redskins; we find our teenagers dancing Nigerian Yoruba dances and entering trance states to the electric vibration of the Beatles who have borrowed shamanism from Africa (sic) sources. We find communal uses of ganja, the hemp sacred to Mahadev (Great Lord) Shiva. There's now heard the spread of mantra chanting in private and such public manifestations as peace marches, and soon we will have Mantra Rock over the airwaves. All the available traditions of U.S. Indian vision-quest, peyote ritual, mask dancing, Oriental pranayama, east Indian ear music are becoming available to the U.S. unconscious through the spiritual reach of the young. (Ginsberg qtd. in Nuttall, 1972: 192)

By present standards Ginsberg's remarks may seem glib and culturally insensitive, but Stephens notes how a countercultural Orientalism contributed to the general search for *communitas* in the 1960s:

Victor Turner analyses the counterculture as an endeavour to create a '*communitas*' (a social anti-structure, a paradisiacal, Utopian, millennial state of affairs) permanently contained within life. The sixties India bears out Turner's use of the concept of *communitas*; a timeless condition and an eternal 'now' where everything is exceptional. (1998: 60)

The extent to which such a view informed radical theatre groups no doubt varied, both in terms of the search for *communitas*, and the role of the Orient in this search. However, even a cursory examination of the content of the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now* (1968), the apogee of collective creation by the group in the 1960s, confirms the impact of Eastern culture and religion, and a fascination with the indigenous 'native' (the Native American in *Paradise Now*). Such an unauthorised pastiche of religious practices and iconography arguably stands as a blatant example of shallow 'interculturalism', which authors such as

Bharucha (1993) find so troubling. Similarly, the Performance Group used rituals from other cultures to create *Dionysus in 69* (1968).<sup>3</sup> The San Francisco Mime Troupe seems to have been less eclectic, using materials from non-western sources only when the original play demanded it, as with the Troupe's adaptation of Brecht's *Congress of the Whitewashers* (1969). Yet both Schechner and Davis, leaders of the latter two groups, found time to go to the East, to India and Japan respectively, while involved in major productions, and when the Living Theatre split into 'four cells' in 1970, one cell went to India.

### Vietnam

American military involvement in Vietnam began in earnest in the 1950s and ended in the 1970s, but the controversy about this involvement reached its peak in the 1960s. Since it was so vividly reported in the media, and since so many young American males served in Vietnam (more than 536,000 in 1968), and were wounded (approx. 303,000 in total), or killed (approx. 57,000 combat and non-combat), it could not fail to have an impact upon the counterculture. Across the nation the war divided families, friends, and communities, but it also brought people together. Indeed, in some ways Vietnam helped the counterculture, or the Movement, to coalesce. Many people who had previously been involved in civil rights activities or student politics joined in anti-war activities. Thousands of groups sprang up opposing the war in Vietnam.

The war also created an intense small group experience for hundreds of thousands of young American servicemen and women. During training and active service the primary group for these people became the platoon, within which the smaller squad or section of a dozen or so individuals provided a regular group of comrades.<sup>4</sup> The platoon or the squad can be seen as a mirror structure to the idea of the commune as the new family in America. American soldiers, if the accounts by Michael Herr in *Despatches* (1977) and other sources are accurate, listened to rock music, took drugs, and behaved like affinity groups both on and off active duty.

The effect of Vietnam on radical theatres has been studied in depth (See especially Fenn, 1992). Many groups used the war for material in their productions, or lent their support to demonstrations and protests. The Bread and Puppet Theatre, for example, created *Fire and Burning Towns* (1965), *Gas for Vietnam* (1965), and *A Man Says Goodbye to His Mother* (1968), often presenting these in the form of a public protest. Similarly, the San Francisco Mime Troupe addressed the war through works such as *L'Amant Militaire* (1967) and *The Dragon Lady's Revenge* (1971). The Living Theatre's adaptation of *Antigone* (1967) emphasised the futility of war, and parts of *Paradise Now* referred directly to Vietnam. The

<sup>3</sup> Bharucha is severely critical of Richard Schechner's interest in the adaptation of non-Western ritual for Western modes of performance.

<sup>4</sup> A platoon (25-50 soldiers) is the principal division of a military company (100-150 soldiers).

Performance Group used the My Lai<sup>5</sup> massacre for material in *Commune* (1970-71). Megan Terry's *Viet Rock* (1965), Barbara Garson's *MacBird* (1966), and *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical* (1967) by Jerome Ragni, James Rado, and Galt McDermott focussed on the war and/or the anxiety of young people about the draft.

The ways in which the Vietnam conflict may have influenced ideas specifically about the group in radical theatres, on the other hand, are more difficult to determine. There is little evidence that veterans of military service in Vietnam became members of radical theatre groups in the 1960s. Nor is there much to suggest that radical theatres directly explored the group experience of those serving Vietnam, in the manner of, say, Kenneth Brown's *The Brig* (1963), which dealt with the harsh reality of being a Marine in the late 1950s (a few actors in the Living Theatre, which debuted *The Brig*, had been in the Army or Marines). It seems fair to suggest that portraying Vietnam as a positive bonding experience would have been regarded as a counter-countercultural action. Nevertheless, members of radical theatres would have been aware that an unusual and extremely perilous group experience was taking place for others within their demographic. For example, the actions of a particular group of American soldiers, led by Second Lieutenant William Calley Jr., who were responsible for the massacre at My Lai, provided a negative image of the power of the group, hence the inclusion of My Lai in the Performance Group's *Commune*.

#### Charles Manson and the Manson 'family'

A group phenomenon of the 1960s which can only have harmed the group idea(l) in the eyes of the general population was that associated with Charles Manson. Manson's group has been referred to variously as a cult, commune, or gang, and was described in a bestseller by Ed Sanders as *The Family: The Story of the Charles Manson Dune Buggy Attack Battalion* (1972). The group had many of the attributes of hippie communal living i.e., desert homes, unusual clothes, nudity, scavenging behaviour, but the murders of at least seven people in July and August 1969 by some of its members did not square with the 1960s hippie philosophy of the new tribalism. The publicity surrounding the Tate-LaBianca murders and media reports about the tyrannical and messianic control wielded by Manson over his 'disciples' soured public perceptions of communal experiments, particularly those that took place in remote areas.

Countercultural perceptions of Manson were more ambiguous. Manson himself was not convicted of committing murder. The targets of violence were seen by many young people as members of the Establishment. The family was clearly an outlaw community. All of these factors afforded the group a certain mystique. The Manson family as the embodiment of a political and countercultural position seemed to outweigh some of the disagreeable details of what its members actually did. Prominent individuals such

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<sup>5</sup> My Lai translates as village. This village was actually referred to as 'My Lai No.4' by the military.



as Jerry Rubin of the Yippies, and Bernadine Dohrn of the Weather Underground (see below), appeared to endorse Manson rather than reject him in some of their public statements.

The degree to which this anti-thesis of creativity in the group affected radical theatres is again difficult to ascertain. As with My Lai, the Performance Group used the Manson family as a counter-group in *Commune*, both examples acting as a warning about the dangers of the group. Whether the Manson family specifically created disenchantment about groups, or whether it simply carried out its actions at a time when the group ideal had peaked, it could not have given great inspiration to those whose group ideals were founded upon non-violence.

### The Weather Underground

In a similar vein, the Weather Underground phenomenon provided little by way of encouragement to the ideal of the group, at least as a harmony-seeking entity. The group started as a radical faction of Students for a Democratic Society, and went through several permutations between 1968 and 1969 before emerging (and then going underground, hence the final appellation) as an urban terrorist organisation, made up of several cells.<sup>6</sup> It was notable both for several bombings, the most serious of which claimed the lives of four of its own members, and for the engineering of the escape from prison of Timothy Leary.

In terms of a group model, although initially based on Maoist cells, the Weather Underground rapidly evolved into an extreme version of the radical political commune. In the build-up to the Chicago Democratic convention according to one commentator:

During the six weeks between the Cleveland conference and the Four Days of Rage in October, life in the collectives took on a frenzied, brutal, savage air as the Weathermen tried to root out their fear of violence, their sexual inhibitions, their sense of themselves as individuals and all their 'bourgeois hangups' about privacy, cleanliness, politeness, tolerance and humor . . . Inside the collectives the Weathermen were cruel to themselves and each other. Hurt feelings and smoldering grudges poisoned the atmosphere; suffering themselves, people tended to attack each other with increasing violence. Individuals were sometimes attacked so brutally they were left whimpering and speechless. Individuals who seemed to hold back some part of themselves were subject to harsh psychological assault; if they persisted they were sometimes purged. Everyone was overtired and underfed, nervous and fearful. People became stiff and unnatural, afraid they would be attacked for the slightest error, a deliberate process which sometimes hid a desire literally to destroy. (Powers, 1971: 142-45)

Although this description paints a paranoid and dysfunctional picture of the group ideal, it is not difficult to see how an admixture of Maoist or revolutionary politics, group encounter techniques, sexual liberation rhetoric, and a thorough rejection of conventional hierarchy and leadership structures could produce such a

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<sup>6</sup> The organisational lineage is as follows: Radical Youth Movement I; Jesse James Gang; Radical Youth Movement II; Weatherman; Weathermen; and, Weather Underground. The Weatherbureau was the leadership core. The 'weather' motif is taken from Bob Dylan's line 'You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows' in the song 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'.

distorted phenomenon. Other political groups, even those without any commitment to armed struggle, could still create atmospheres of distrust and coercion, as many of those who went on to form the Women's Liberation Movement later attested when reflecting upon their treatment as women in Movement organisations.

In other words, at a certain point the idea(l) of the group can become the ideology of the group, producing the kind of wrong-headed, mob thinking that the philosopher Plato, deeply affected by the fate of Socrates in what was supposed to be Greek civic society, famously attributed to any kind of democratic experiment. Commenting on SDS and the Flint Council of December 27-31 1969, Powers notes:

At one point during the Council Bernadine Dohrn cited Charles Manson and his family, alleged mass murderers, as examples of the savagery which Weathermen sought to emulate. 'Dig it,' she said, 'first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the same room with them, then they even shoved a fork into a victim's stomach. Wild!' For the rest of the council Weathermen greeted each other by holding up three fingers, symbol of the fork. (1971: 168)

Such radical and paradoxical transformations, in this case shown by the initial fellowship of the Port Huron Statement of 1962, created by Students for a Democratic Society, which seemed to inexplicably mutate into the pro-violence rhetoric of an SDS offshoot some seven years later, lends weight to the notion that a collective trauma was experienced in America during the 1960s.

#### The year 1968

It is often argued that the most traumatic year in America in the 1960s, and in Europe, was 1968. In Europe the year was marked by the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia, and the Paris riots by students and workers in May. For Americans, the year was punctuated by several traumatic events, including the devastating Tet offensive in Vietnam, launched by the North Vietnamese Army in January, the My Lai massacre in March (media reports did not come out until later that year), the assassinations of Martin Luther King in April and Robert Kennedy in June, the occupation of Columbia University by SDS in April, and the violence surrounding the Democratic convention in Chicago in August. Over a half million members of the U.S. male population were in Vietnam, the highest figure for any of the years of the Vietnam War, and casualties reached their peak for the entire campaign (approx. 10,600). There were riots in Watts, Los Angeles, and in other cities. Students rebelled on campuses around the country. SDS began to disintegrate as talk of the necessity of armed revolution increased. The Black Panthers grew more militant, and the police response to the Panthers more violent. In short it was an extremely volatile year and it seemed a long way from the Summer of Love (actually mid-1966 through to mid 1967).

The degree to which these events, and the general mood of violence in America in 1968, would have influenced radical theatre groups is difficult to assess. Many theatre groups embraced the idea of guerrilla

theatre even if they did not embrace the idea of guerrilla warfare. They became more committed to street action and to the raising of voices, but not, as far as has been reported to date, to the actual raising of weapons. Such a moderate response was to be expected. The majority of radical theatres were comprised of middle-class, relatively well-educated white liberals, most of whom were more 'dove' than 'hawk' in outlook (otherwise most of the young male members would have been serving in Vietnam).

This is not to say, however, that the upheavals of the late 1960s did not cause disputes or disagreements within radical theatre groups. Many of the events of the 1960s would have fuelled philosophical arguments between otherwise like-minded people. The Open Theatre, for example, was characterised by internal dissent during the 1968-70 period. The Bread and Puppet Theatre transferred its operations from urban New York to rural Vermont between 1968 and 1970. The Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe, and Performance Group, as is indicated in the separate chapters on these groups, went through difficult transitions during the same period.

#### The influence of radical theatres on the counterculture

Up until this point it has been assumed that the interaction between the counterculture and radical theatre groups was in a single direction i.e., radical theatres absorbed countercultural trends. The reverse was also true, and it is important to note, that radical theatre groups evolved as the counterculture evolved, internalising and distilling some of the essential features in a way that could be readily shown or performed (see especially Rieser, 1982: 115-46). For example, protest plays of various kinds were created and these portrayed many of the central issues in a dramatic form more powerful than the mere enumeration of facts and figures.

Furthermore, radical theatres may have led the counterculture to a certain extent, young people taking their cues from what they saw on and off stage. One could argue that radical theatres such as the Living Theatre and the Performance Group emancipated audiences in a more profound way than the shallow attempts at liberation produced via shows like *Hair*, i.e., the nudity and sexuality performed in public with *Paradise Now* and *Dionysus in 69* respectively. These productions received a great deal of publicity and were seen by thousands of people. Many people wanted to join such groups (and did in the case of the Living Theatre), asked questions about the lifestyles of group members backstage (e.g., 'Do you live as a commune?'), and showed a great deal of curiosity about the philosophies of radical theatre groups.

The Living Theatre, in particular, seems to have seen its role as a working exhibit of countercultural values. When not performing on stage, the group often publicly performed its communal living, open sexuality, and drug use, along with various anti-establishment actions (pickets, vigils, street protests), clearly

identifying this with the group as a whole, rather than with the private actions of individual members of the group. Furthermore, Judith Malina and Julian Beck and other members of the Living Theatre had direct access and contact with intellectuals of the day, such as Paul Goodman, R.D. Laing, Murray Bookchin, and Allen Ginsberg, all of whom were friends of the Living Theatre.

In terms of mention in wider countercultural despatches and commentaries, the citation list is very long, particularly in the case of the Living Theatre, but also with respect to the Performance Group and the San Francisco Mime Troupe. All three held iconic status within the counterculture. Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969), for example, acknowledges the importance of the Living Theatre. He reproduces a poem by Beck that is used in *Paradise Now* as emblematic of the countercultural spirit, although in a footnote he questions the group's potential for creating art when so preoccupied with therapy and tribal ritual (151-52). Roszak also notes the contribution of the San Francisco Mime Troupe (and the Bread and Puppet Theatre) in making political protest lively, immediate, and no less appropriate than pamphleteering (153). Richard Neville's *Play Power* (1970) contains several laudatory references to the Living Theatre, demonstrating how much they were seen as part of the countercultural vanguard in Europe. Even non-countercultural commentaries picked up on the leading role of radical theatres. Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* (1970), under the heading of 'Simulated Environments', describes the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* as part of 'a first stumbling step towards these simulations of the future' (228):

When *Dionysus in '69* was performed in New York, a critic summed up the theories of its playwright, Richard Schechner, in the following words. 'Theater has traditionally said to an audience, "Sit down and I'll tell you a story". Why can't it also say, "Stand up and we'll play a game?"' (228).

Subsequent commentaries on the 1960s have noted the central role of theatres in the counterculture. For example, Unger and Unger (1988) devote several pages (394-98) to the importance of theatre groups in countercultural efforts to show that 'the personal is political.' In their view, of all the 'Radical Independent Theaters' (Living Theatre, Open Theatre, Performance Group, San Francisco Mime Troupe, Bread and Puppet Theatre, El Teatro Campesino), none 'created such large cultural waves as Ron Davis's San Francisco Mime Troupe' (396). Similarly, Cate's *Sixty-Eight: Year of The Barricades* (1988) contains a section headed 'radical theatres' (243-52), which briefly mentions both the Performance Group and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and notes the pivotal role played by the Living Theatre. Marwick (1998) also cites American 'experimental' theatres such as the Living Theatre, Bread and Puppet Theatre, Open Theatre, and San Francisco Mime Troupe as crucial to what he regards as subcultural formations in the 1960s, arguing that:

Experimental theatre articulated what was already within society, not something exterior to it. It did indeed challenge, and help to modify 'repressive democracy'. And experimental theatre represented a direct and personal response to the totalizing pressures of a multinational commercialism operating through the electronic media. (358)

### The impact of radical theatres on rock music

Marwick regards rock music as the most powerful countercultural medium of the 1960s, principally because of its greater accessibility, both as a consumer product, and as a relatively non-intellectual mode of communication. Nevertheless, rock music and theatre were not mutually exclusive. For example, it can be argued that the Living Theatre helped to theatricalise live rock music performance, in America at least, through their influence, as noted in Chapter One, upon Jim Morrison, lead singer of The Doors. Morrison, a former film student in Los Angeles, and well versed in Artaud's writings, saw *Paradise Now* (1968) some four times in close succession between Los Angeles and San Francisco in early 1969. Morrison gave the impoverished Living Theatre sufficient money (\$2,500) to return to New York to complete its engagements, and he stepped up his own stage performances with The Doors, getting arrested for indecent exposure at a Doors show in Miami, in May 1969, soon after seeing the Living Theatre. Other rock performers, including Iggy Pop, have cited the Living Theatre as a liberating influence.

Similarly, the San Francisco rock and psychedelic music scene of 1965-68 is rarely discussed without some reference to the San Francisco Mime Troupe (See especially Perry [1985]). To some extent this is unavoidable, because the Mime Troupe's first official business manager was Bill Graham. Graham oversaw four successful fund-raising appeals, or 'rock dance benefits', for the Mime Troupe between 1965 and 1967. Recognising the lucrative potential of such events he went on to become one of the most successful rock promoters in history, establishing the Fillmore Auditorium on both coasts of the U.S. The first benefit for the San Francisco Mime Troupe carried contributions from the Mime Troupe itself, and featured bands such as Big Brother and the Holding Company and the Grateful Dead. The Jefferson Airplane used the Mime Troupe studios for rehearsals at one stage. Some early Mime Troupe works were scored by Phil Lesh, a founder member of the Grateful Dead. The demographics and geographics of the 'Hashbury' scene coincided neatly with those of most of the membership of San Francisco Mime Troupe. Essentially, then, the Mime Troupe and San Francisco psychedelic bands were good neighbours, if not actual communal bedfellows.

### Radical theatres on or in film

A number of films and documentaries were made involving radical theatres during the 1960s, many of them filmed versions of productions. For example, the Living Theatre's productions of *The Connection*, filmed by Shirley Clarke in 1960, *The Brig* made by Jonas Mekas in 1964, and *Paradise Now*, made by Sheldon Rochlin in 1970, received wide underground exposure. They were shown at festivals, toured art-house cinemas, and were widely shown throughout college campuses. Several television documentaries or televised productions were made, particularly in Europe, introducing the Living Theatre to non-theatre

audiences. To a lesser extent the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group were also documented on film. A documentary entitled *Have You Heard of the San Francisco Mime Troupe?* was made in 1966, and *Dionysus in 69* was released in a limited distribution film version in 1970, directed by Brian De Palma and Bruce Joel Rubin. A film version of the Open Theatre's *The Serpent* was also released in 1970, together with an accompanying group discussion about the play by cast members. Most of these works came too late to have an impact upon the 1960s, and their actual effects upon those within the counterculture would be difficult to gauge. However, the films conveyed, in their various forms, a strong sense of group solidarity, both in terms of visual appearance, and in terms of shared philosophies and values.

Furthermore, the San Francisco Mime Troupe was parodied as a bumbling 'Gorilla Theatre' commune living in the desert (after its refusal to appear for only a pittance of a fee), in what many regard as the quintessential film of the counterculture, *Easy Rider* (1969). Michelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* (1970), another iconic countercultural film, contains an often-discussed free-love sequence, with young naked couples at play in the Death Valley dust, presumably as innocent hippie nature sprites. The actors in these scenes were members of the Open Theatre, carrying out some of their routine rehearsal exercises (e.g., mirroring one another). The film credits specifically acknowledge 'Joe Chaikin's Open Theatre'. The effects of such exposure may have been subtle, but it indicates that when archetypes of the countercultural spirit were sought, radical theatres were obvious candidates.

### Conclusion

The concept of the collective in America in the 1960s lacked a particular structural formula, but it was suffused with a belief in ultrademocracy. Ultrademocracy implied an attempt to preserve simultaneously both the integrity of the individual and the power of collective experience, whether as work or play. Ideally, the boundaries between work and play, public and private, art and politics ceased to exist. Rather than specify a particular collective structure, such as the workers' collectives, peasant communes, or Kibbutzes of other societies, the leaderless affinity group principle applied.

Reflecting the views of Marx, Kropotkin, and Bookchin, about pre-industrial versus post-industrial society, this wholesale egalitarianism or ultrademocracy can be seen as an effort to re-establish pre-industrial community, albeit without an especially informed understanding of modern post-industrial technological society. Countercultural communes, committed to the de-alienation of human labour, and therapeutic communities, committed to de-alienation of self, suggest a kind of schizophrenia about what to do.

Many theatre groups would have found themselves in the position of trying to reconcile both (as did some communities) by focussing on self-realisation and the de-alienation of labour at the same time. Life was

synonymous with art, it was not meant to be public work punctuated by moments of private respite. Yet most of the members of radical theatre groups came from the new technical intelligentsia, not from political groups or older classes. This placed them in a difficult position, facing what Gramsci has called ‘the dilemma of the intellectual’.

By contrast, the principal trends within the counterculture would have provided some sense of security. Signals that group experimentation was inherently good were emanating from several sources. Communes were popular, as were other efforts to form affinity groups. While therapy groups were a part of this trend, it is unlikely that great caution was exercised in the incorporation of psychological and emotional explorations. Thus, while the open existential space of the group was constantly reaffirmed by the politics of the group experience and the counterculture, it also served to increase the level of risk of potential anxiety within groups, in some cases to the point of severe psychosis. Using the typological framework of attributes that was used in the previous chapter it is possible to add some new configurations of the group paradigm. (See Table 3.1 below)

Table 3.1 Comparison of group models with key attributes

Group Type	Degree of voluntarism	Leadership attitude	Egalitarian beliefs	Need for group boundary	Attitude to larger society	Need for member ‘authenticity’
Hippie communes	High	Highly ambivalent	Highly anti-hierarchical	Low	Hostile or wary	High
Civil rights/New Left groups	High	Guarded acceptance	Positive, but not entirely anti-hierarchical	Low	Ambivalent	Low
Manson-type Messianic cults	Difficult to define	Highly positive	Complete deference to leader	Extremely high	Hostile	High
Urban guerrilla groups (e.g., Weather Underground)	High	Hostile	Highly anti-hierarchical	High	Hostile	High

The counterculture thus provided some specific paradigms for the group experience and in general it created a kind of hyper-liminoid setting for experimentation, particularly in terms of the search for *communitas*. Yet it did so without resolving the underlying tensions between the existential, normative, and ideological dimensions of *communitas* identified by Turner. As the following chapters indicate, the three radical theatre groups were not immune to the trends and contradictory features of the counterculture and each had to struggle with the dilemmas created by the quest for *communitas*.

## Chapter Four

### The Living Theatre

I believe that the community is in some ways the most important aspect of our work. It's also perhaps the least well realized, the least well perfected at the moment. It's more a concept than reality. We'd like this community to function truly like an anarchist society. When we speak of free society, we mean that it is necessary to create a society where the group is not sacrificed to the individual any more than the individual is to the group. The ultimate goal of our theories is a society without authority. We will be free to cooperate, to work together. Obviously, to talk about these things on the stage and not practice them would be a mockery. It must be made real in one's own life. Judith and I make a real effort to disappear into the community, to blend into it. We wither away, little by little, as we want the state to do. But there is a long road ahead yet. We already function as an anarchist community. We already function as an anarchist group, wherever we can; we share equally in the money we take in. Some members concern themselves with contracts and money matters, and they make the decisions. Spiritually and psychologically, the community is already anarchist. (Beck qtd. in Biner, 1971: 163)

#### Introduction

Despite the forward-looking optimism contained in the above remarks, the Living Theatre was not as new or of the moment as the description implies. The theatre was founded in New York in 1946 by Judith Malina and Julian Beck. It began rather humbly as just another Off-Broadway theatre, but established itself during the 1950s as an important theatre in the Off-Off-Broadway and avant-garde scene, particularly with Jack Gelber's *The Connection* (1959) and Kenneth Brown's *The Brig* (1963).

From 1964, after closure of its New York theatre by the Inland Revenue Service, through to 1968, it portrayed itself, and was accepted, as a wandering American radical theatre in exile, even though membership was increasingly European. The group was present at key European political and countercultural events, including the student occupation of L'Odéon in Paris in May 1968, and the Avignon Theatre Festival, from which it famously withdrew because of attempts at censorship by the organisers and local authorities.

Both as performers on stage, particularly with works such as *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* (1964) and *Paradise Now* (1968), and as a company off stage, the group sought to present itself as a type of total or self-contained community, as the opening quote by Beck suggests. The official policy and politics of the group was 'pacifist anarchism', a hybridisation of the anarchist views of Peter Kropotkin, Paul Goodman and others, together with a humanistic and deeply felt abhorrence of warfare and injustice. Much of the stage material reflected this political stance: the state always violates the freedom of the individual. As the state should wither away, so too should the authority figures of the theatre i.e., the directors. Malina and Beck returned several times to the notion of the 'withering of the director'. This became popular



terminology in radical theatres of the 1960s. Richard Schechner, for example, used the phrase in directorial notes to the Performance Group on at least one occasion.

The pattern of performance for the Living Theatre in the mid-1960s was a continuous stream of one or two-night engagements, a half-dozen in one town or city if it was lucky. There was no permanent base from which to work. This meant that as the group toured constantly in Europe, it did so very conspicuously both as a penniless theatre and as a family group of around 30 members, including children and spouses, usually in a caravan of Volkswagen Kombis or Microbuses. Photographs appeared in the media depicting the Living Theatre as hippie minstrels, a movable free love and hashish-worshipping feast. Members were routinely arrested for minor drugs or indecency charges, and the group was escorted to the border, or asked to leave the country, on a number of occasions. This gave the impression that it was incessantly hounded in Europe by the authorities.

The return-from-exile U.S. tour of late 1968 added to the Living Theatre's notoriety. Performances of *Paradise Now* provoked great debate about whether or not Living Theatre performances could sensibly be called theatre, and whether or not the group was sufficiently in touch with the political situation in America and with the counterculture that had evolved during the course of the 1960s. People asked if Living Theatre productions were theatre or therapy. If therapy, then for whom? Actors or audience? Could the Living Theatre actors act? What gave its members the right to harangue the audience and preach pacifism at the same time? The fact that the Living Theatre had been an exemplary Off-Broadway theatre in the late 1950s and early 1960s, breaking new ground with plays by European and American playwrights, and its close involvement in the Off-Off-Broadway and avant-garde New York scene of the early 1960s, were less important. Public arguments took place around the so-called 'collective creations' of the group from the mid-1960s onwards, notably Eric Bentley's 'I Reject the Living Theatre' in *The New York Times* of 20 October, 1968, and Clive Barnes's reply a week later, defending the Living Theatre, entitled 'Clive Barnes vs. Eric Bentley'. The greater part of an issue of *The Drama Review (TDR)* of spring 1969 was given over to long, sometimes emotional, responses to the current quartet of works ([Stefan] Brecht, 1969; McDermott, 1969; Silber, 1969). The group returned to Europe in spring of 1969, somewhat bruised by the American tour experience. In the course of honouring pre-existing touring commitments discussions were held, in late 1969, about the future of the group. In January 1970 the Living Theatre issued a statement announcing that it was dividing into four cells to be located in different countries. This announcement was framed as a deliberate strategy, as if such dispersal were nothing but a logical step in the continuing evolution of the Living Theatre.

There is an impressive body of work about the Living Theatre of the 1960s. Julian Beck and Judith Malina have written extensively on the life of the group (Beck, 1964, 1965, 1986; Beck, Malina et al., 1975; Malina 1972, 1984) or around particular works (Living Theatre, 1969; Malina in Brown, 1965; Malina and

Beck, 1971). Several books about the Living Theatre of the 1960s were published contemporaneously (Biner, 1971; Neff, 1970; Rostagno, 1970; Silvestro, 1971; Smith, 1969). Most histories of contemporary American theatre devote a chapter to the Living Theatre (Bigsby, 1985: 74-96; Croyden, 1974: 89-134). The literary, aesthetic, and countercultural influences on the group have been discussed (Gaines, 1982: 191-203; Morris, 1989: 35-49; Rieser, 1982: 147-75; Ronen, 1976: 107-53). Critical commentary on the contribution of the Living Theatre to both American theatre, and performance theory in general, continues (Callaghan, 1998; Moore, 1998; Rosenthal, 1998). Much has been said about its art and its politics (Perkins, 1982; Tytell, 1995).

However, little analysis has been conducted of the events leading up to the 1970 subdivision of the group into four cells. The role of the group's philosophy of the late 1960s in this fragmentation has not been greatly questioned. Rhetoric about the dual preservation of the individual and the collective, the notion of the homeless anarchist community, and the promise of the withering away of leadership figures within the group (see Beck's idealisation of the Living Theatre above) strongly connotes an ultrademocratic and, I will argue, problematic group paradigm.

This chapter pools, reinterprets, and, where appropriate, re-emphasises, material already in existence about the Living Theatre in order to determine more clearly its group idea and ideal of the group in the 1960s. Although the main focus is upon the period 1959 to 1970, I first discuss the early years of the Living Theatre (1947-63) as they impinge upon an evolving group ethos. There are references in this chapter to chronological tables contained in appendices (Appendices C-F). These provide information on where and when works were performed. They also contain interpolated remarks (shaded sections within the chronological tables) about the rehearsal process, performance or housing conditions, and other contingencies relating to the group's existence over the 1950s and 1960s. There is detailed discussion in the main text of key group-based productions: *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* (1964), *Frankenstein* (1965), *Antigone* (1967) and *Paradise Now* (1968).

I argue that the Living Theatre faced the following challenges:

- a) There was a strong and widely shared existential *communitas* orientation, or idea, driving the group, one which encouraged therapeutic self-expression;
- b) The normative *communitas*, or the codes of conduct of the group, were relatively coherent, particularly because the Living Theatre saw itself as a group resisting the coercive forces of the State;
- c) The political ideal of the group, or its sense of ideological *communitas*, although portrayed as a collectivist anarchism, was closer to an individualist form of anarchism, in the tradition of Thoreau more than Bakunin or Kropotkin, even though Beck and Malina were acolytes of the former two thinkers; and

- d) The leaders of the group effectively 'rode the wave' of ultrademocracy in order to maintain the group, but its individualist anarchist politics and the lack of commitment to a community other than itself, made it difficult to reassert the group as a theatre embodying community.

### **The early New York period 1947-59**

And I think for many years we had a theatre and we spoke of many things but did not have the personal strength to try to do anything about it; while we always talked, really, or felt we were talking on the stage, in one way or another, of an eventual free society or a revolution, in our own personal lives and in the running of the theatre itself – though maybe it was more cooperative than other theatres around in New York City – it was still a system of hired actors and paid actors and hired technicians and paid technicians. (Beck qtd. in Bissinger, 1967: 6)

The Living Theatre came into existence in 1946, but Judith Malina, who was born in 1926, and Julian Beck, who was a year older, had discussed ideas for a theatre since their first meeting in the early 1940s.<sup>1</sup> During the theatre's early history (often periodised as 1951 to 1963, bracketed by the apartment debut of short chamber pieces through to the closure of the Fourteenth Street Theatre by the Internal Revenue Service), it appears to have been managed by Beck and Malina in the tradition of the theatrical 'stage couple' (they married in 1948). It was conceived as their own professional theatre. They entered the theatrical world at a time when there was a relatively sharp division of labour and a strong demarcation of artistic status within the production system.<sup>2</sup> With few exceptions, staging a play involved authoritarian control by the director, co-ordinating a cast of character-focussed actors, artist stage designers, and playwrights who worked in isolation to deliver and revise relatively self-contained scripts. In art and society in general, a spirit of individualism prevailed. While Malina and Beck may not have been deviating radically from convention at this time, the fact that they approached their project as a couple, and the fact that they were married, are important insofar as these fulfil a pre-condition in Bion's basic assumption group, described in Chapter Two. When the principle of leaderless groups took hold in the mid-to-late 1960s, Malina and Beck were already well established as a parental, nurturing, pair-bond within the group, albeit an unconventional pair-bond by conservative middle-class standards, as Tytell (1995) makes abundantly clear throughout his history of the Living Theatre. They provided compensatory and unstated reassurance for the group.

The creation of the pair's much wished-for theatre, promoted as a 'literate theater group' by Beck (Tytell, 1995: 33), spanned several years, and was accompanied by a steady diet of research and study in or around

<sup>1</sup> Their first reported encounter was in September 1943, at Genius Incorporated on Times Square, a club that functioned as something of a drop-in center for unemployed actors. It has often been stated that from the moment of first meeting they became romantically attached and discussed visions for a theatre (Biner, 1971: 19; Tytell, 1995: 3-6).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to acknowledge the two founders in their own generational context. The most vivid images of the Living Theatre of the 1960s, when both founders regularly appeared on stage amid the larger group, suggest that all were, and always had been, members of an undifferentiated kinship group. Yet Beck and Malina were beatniks, or at least post-war intellectuals, before they were hippies. Beck was briefly in the same high school class at Horace Mann, New Haven with Jack Kerouac (1922-69), the most famous literary figure associated with the Beat generation (Tytell, 1995: 12).

the theatre. For example, Malina took inspiration from Hallie Flanagan's *Arena* (1940).<sup>3</sup> Although they absorbed as much theatre and film as they could as a couple by going to shows together, Beck focussed at first upon painting and stage design. Gaining access to the annual Provincetown summer gatherings of select members of the New York artistic community, Beck was able to mingle with people such as Tennessee Williams, Jackson Pollock, and Paul Goodman. Goodman, as a philosopher, playwright, and friend, came to exert a major influence over the Living Theatre in the first two decades of its existence. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, Goodman's libertarian anarchism exerted a significant influence within the wider counterculture in the 1960s.

### Initial European influences

Malina was more interested in acting and directing, and sought out teachers and mentors in these fields, notably Erwin Piscator, a German emigré director who had worked with Brecht and had first coined the term 'epic theatre'. Piscator, like Brecht, had been a member of the German Communist Party. From 1945 until 1947 Malina studied as an actress at Piscator's Dramatic Workshop at the New School for Social Research in New York (Beck appears to have sat in on some of the classes but did not formally enrol), where Piscator taught from 1939 to 1951.<sup>4</sup> While this connection with an ensemble-focussed German director of the 1920s and 30s did not necessarily furnish the pair with a ready-made group ethos, or politics, for the Living Theatre the way in which Piscator viewed the actor's role was important. Piscator was less concerned with training the performer as a psychologically rich individual, but focussed instead upon the actor's position in the more global, or epic, aspects of a theatrical production. Actors were meaningful insofar as they represented a larger idea. Nuances of character mattered much less.

Such thinking was also characteristic of Bertolt Brecht, another theatre theorist and practitioner in whom Malina and Beck took a serious interest from the outset. Brecht, albeit in more orthodox Marxist terms, similarly conceived the individual principally in relation to the collective, questioning the very notion of a fixed individual identity. Citing early works such as *In the Jungle of the Cities* (1921-3) and *Man is Man* (1924-5), Speidel (1982: 47) traces Brecht's increasing rejection of the concept of the autonomous individual. According to Speidel this is elaborated in more sophisticated terms in *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939). The humble protagonist, although strong in character and integrity, commits herself to the collective enterprise of the war effort and must then accept the consequences of this decision, whatever the consequences for her immediate family (57). On balance, the collective is more important than the individual, but, as Esslin (1959: 133-176) has argued, Brecht's overt allegiance to communist ideology was

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<sup>3</sup> The book chronicles Flanagan's years as the head of the Federal Theatre Project (1935-39). In it, she documents her battle against the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities and some of her superiors, who regarded her efforts to employ out-of-work actors and other theatre workers in socially responsible and entertaining theatre, with great suspicion.

<sup>4</sup> Her debt to Piscator's teaching and ideas has regularly been signaled by Malina over subsequent years, even though she has indicated that she has not lived up to his expectations (Malina, 1984: 8).

underscored by his need to maintain an individual creative identity and his political sympathies were to some extent at odds with the basic tenets of Soviet or German communism:

From his earliest youth Brecht was in revolt against the bourgeois world and the social order that had led to war. But, although he was briefly involved in the Communist rising at Augsburg at the end of the First World War, his attitude remained that of an anarchist, iconoclast, and radical pacifist, who was against authority of any kind (134-35)

If Esslin is correct it is easy to see how Brecht provided Malina and Beck with exemplary material with which to work. They too became drawn to anarchism and pacifism.

In dramaturgical terms Brecht also had useful techniques to offer. He stressed the importance of the *Verfremdungseffekt*. Although it is most commonly translated as 'alienation' effect, '*Verfremdung*' translates as 'estrangement'. The German word for 'alienation' is *Veräußerung*. The latter tends to connote stronger dissociation than estrangement, and its use to convey Brecht's intention may not be entirely appropriate. In any case, this effect often appears as a pause in the action to examine the content of what has just been presented. It helps to focus both actors and audience on social reality. Brecht's theatre depended heavily upon dialectical reasoning, and for Brecht, Who was saying what? was still an important question. Speech could be interrogated and reinterpreted. For Beck and Malina, intellectuals at heart, this acknowledgement of the need for conscious reflection by the audience was no doubt highly valued.

If Malina and Beck were searching at this stage for guidance on how a theatre should work as a group, either on stage or off stage, Brecht did not articulate in a convenient way any kind of group ethos. Rather than explain in overall terms the working procedures of the ensemble, he stresses the importance of multidisciplinary teams in the first phase of production, i.e., the creation of the script:

We made many experiments. I can tell of some of my own work, as I know that best. We organized small collectives of specialists in various fields to 'make' the plays; among these specialists were historians and sociologists as well as playwrights, actors and other people of the theatre. (1978: 78)

In the second phase of production, the 'first discussion of the setting', Brecht talks of 'groupings' as an important consideration: 'Basic idea of the set. Will a permanent set do the trick? Creation of stage sketches which supply elements of the story, groupings, individual attitudes of the chief characters' (241). Later, considering 'Phases of a Production' under the subheading '9. Discussion of Costumes and Masks', he refers again to groupings: 'Once the groupings can be seen as a whole and the characters emerge individually the costumes and masks are discussed and work on them begins' (241).

Brecht thus inverts a conventional view of *mise en scène*, concentrating first on the groupings of actors, and then on individual characterisation. The concept of the autonomous stage character, and the heroic or anti-heroic individual is de-emphasised in Brecht's work. The actions of the individual are always filtered through a social lens. To reiterate this principle his list of 'common tendencies for actors to guard against'

includes 'Detaching oneself from groups in order to stand alone' (245). The group as a visual and physical whole on stage is, then, important for Brecht. During the 1960s, radical theatre groups such as the Living Theatre, the Performance Group, the Open Theatre, and, with much less concern for the constant maintenance of a clustering together of actors on stage, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, seem to have similarly regarded the visual group effect on stage as vitally important.

The process of text development seems to have been a different matter. While Brecht does not demand a complete separation between the creation of the text and its performance, he both values the text as a major starting point, and sees it as a skilled collaborative effort, perhaps involving actors, but at the very least involving some particular expertise. The degree to which this carried over into radical theatre groups of the 1960s seems to have varied greatly. Firstly, less respect was accorded the text as a matter of principle. Even the Open Theatre, which a number of commentators have singled out as playwright-friendly (collaborators included Claude Van Itallie, Megan Terry, Susan Yankowitz), kept the playwright at arm's length: '... in the Open Theater, the writer is neither an integral part of the group nor an independent outsider providing a finished script' (Yankowitz, 1998: 82). Secondly, where a text was permitted, it was often solely the result of collaborative efforts between director and performers, as if together they, through some sort of equally proportioned contribution process, could provide the requisite resources for a viable text. The 'script research team' was also the group, especially in the case of the Living Theatre of the mid-to-late 1960s. Individual literary or dramaturgical expertise was, for some, both bourgeois and anti-democratic in the American 'cultural revolution' of the 1960s. Many young Americans looked favourably upon 'cultural revolutions' in other countries during the 1960s, including the Chinese Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966. Characteristically, such revolutions were extremely hostile both to the fruits of intellectual labour and to their creators, to the point of making it a capital offence to be an intellectual. By these standards, a mild contempt for the playwright seems relatively benign. This anti-intellectual countercultural trend notwithstanding, Brecht was to remain an important influence on the Living Theatre.

#### American theatrical and intellectual influences and early performance venues

Malina's study at the New School also exposed her to American radical theatre heritage in person. Individuals associated with the Group Theatre (1931-41), such as Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler, gave lectures and led a number of classes at the Dramatic Workshop at this time. The former members of the Group Theatre were not advocates for collectivist theatre in a socialist or anarchist sense (Harold Clurman repeatedly denied any overt political affiliations, even when the McCarthy era had well and truly faded).<sup>5</sup> However, they had often worked and lived in a communal way in the 1930s, partly by force of financial circumstances (sharing accommodation in a large group to save money). They also chose to work on plays under communal conditions, most notably in their summer removals as an entire group, with families, to

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<sup>5</sup> See Gaines (1982).

leafy locations out of New York, echoing the practice of the Moscow Arts Theatre in earlier decades.<sup>6</sup> Group Theatre alumni could also provide insights and intelligence reports on other radical theatres of the 1920s and 1930s for aspiring practitioners. They witnessed the more purist attempts at collectivity of some of their peers, such as the New Playwrights' Theatre, Workers Laboratory Theatre, Prolet Bühne and other groups operating in New York in the 1920s and 1930s, and Group Theatre members often gave free classes to such groups.

Like model intellectuals, Beck and Malina also read extensively on social and political philosophy during the 1940s. Malina became particularly interested in anarchism, such as that espoused by Kropotkin, and, much closer to home, the anarchist ideas of Paul Goodman. She attended Goodman's classes on anarchism and psychotherapy in 1949 (Tytell, 1995: 47). The couple were invited to join in the formation of a rural commune in 1951 (Tytell, 1995: 62), and Malina began attending anarchist meetings in April of that year.

The furthering of their political education coincided with the debut of the Living Theatre. When plans to convert a Wooster Street cellar came to nothing and the Cherry Lane Theatre, although rented, was unavailable in late 1951, Beck and Malina elected to stage private performances in the living room of their apartment at 789 West End Avenue. The week-long season of short works by Paul Goodman, Bertolt Brecht, Gertrude Stein, and Gabriel Garcia Lorca in August 1951 marked the semi-public debut of the Living Theatre. In December 1951 the official launch took place at the Cherry Lane Theatre, featuring Gertrude Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*. During the next nine months they presented works by Kenneth Rexroth, Pablo Picasso, T.S. Eliot, Alfred Jarry and Goodman with varying degrees of success. In many respects the infant Living Theatre was simply an avant-garde theatre at this point, but there were indications of a nascent communal group ethos.

Firstly, tenancy of the Cherry Lane Theatre was abruptly terminated by the Fire Department in August 1952, ostensibly because of the flammability of the sets. Beck believed that this was merely a pretext for closure and that the theatre was really closed down because of rumours that some of the actors were living communally in the theatre space (Tytell, 1995: 86). Meagre production budgets became the norm once Beck's initial inheritance of \$6,000 ran out. Expectations of running a conventional professional theatre, at equity rates for those involved, changed quite rapidly to a credo of sacrifice for the sake of art. For example, it cost less than \$35 to stage *Ubu*, according to Biner, and actors went without pay, half of them sleeping in the theatre at night between performances (1971: 32). Whether or not an enforced austerity engendered a communal spirit right at this point, it seems to have set the tone for later years, when members of the Living Theatre accepted extremely harsh communal living conditions with apparent alacrity. In terms of Kanter's commitment maintenance requirements for a successful communal group, the

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<sup>6</sup> The Performance Group followed a similar practice in securing college residencies for the summer (see Chapter Six).

Living Theatre appears to have fulfilled the 'sacrifice' requirement consistently from an early point in its existence.

The second point relates to a scene in Goodman's *Faustina*, in which Faustina, wife of emperor Marcus Aurelius, 'breaks frame' to chide the audience for the failure of anyone leaping on stage to intervene in the brutal murder scene which has just taken place. By implication at least, there was the possibility that instead of two mutually exclusive groups in one space, performers and audience, a new group could have formed, albeit ephemerally, within the action, to 'change the script'. That this challenge was itself part of the script does not detract from the willingness within the Living Theatre at this time to enlarge the concept of the performance group in the theatre.

The third point, and this, ironically, may have worked against them in later years, relates to the routine 'Monday gatherings' that were held at the Cherry Lane Theatre. Malina and Beck saw the Living Theatre as a home for the community of artists in New York. For example, according to Biner, on Monday nights 'performance was suspended and poets, writers, and playwrights congregated to read from their works and discuss their current projects. Dylan Thomas and John Cage were among the first who were invited to read and speak' (1971: 32). This initiative prefigured a trend in Off-Off-Broadway theatres a decade later, where places such as the Judson Memorial Church became home to dancers, poets and theatre performers. While the regular Monday event at the Living Theatre was a shrewd public relations move, Beck and Malina were also trying to forge a sense of community, albeit one largely confined to the bohemians of Greenwich Village. The irony in initiating such an activity is that it signals a commitment to the local community. Any withdrawal from the activity could be interpreted as betrayal. This may have influenced later attitudes to the Living Theatre when it left America for Europe and when it returned to tour new work.

#### Home base on West 100th Street

After summary eviction from the Cherry Lane Theatre, it took the Living Theatre until 1954 to secure another performance space, when it rented a loft on West 100th Street. Beck and Malina seemed to be taking the early advice given to them by radical theatre elder Robert Edmond Jones, about staying out of the Broadway theatre game as much as possible, more fully to heart. In any event, this initiative was once again well in advance of the Off-Off-Broadway trend of the late 1950s to create pocket theatres in coffee-houses, lofts and churches. Admission to the new theatre was by donation, and some seven different productions were staged before its closure on November 15, 1955, by the Department of Buildings. The citation for closure related to their repeatedly breaching the occupancy threshold of 18 people at any one time. Again, Beck was convinced that it was part of a persecution campaign against non-conformists, and again it seems that some members of the theatre used the loft as a living space from time to time. Indeed, Malina's diary entries of the early 1950s reflect a growing sense of communalism, albeit with drawbacks.



On March 15, 1952, she observes: 'There are thefts at the theatre and we know our thief is among the company . . . Here we are, the few who have come together communally, and we know that our allegiances are variable and unstable' (1984: 216).

During the rehearsal period for *Ubu Roi*, she notes on July 13, 1952:

They sleep, the bohemians. Here in the tech room, Julian. In the dressing room, Frances and Bruce, and on the floor, Bill Kehoe. In the hallway on prop tables, Eric Weinberger and Bill Mullahy. In the lobby, Nina on the floor . . . One night at the Remo Eric and Bill ask me if they could 'flop' at the theater. They have been here ever since and they work hard.' (236)

Later, on July 27, 1952, Malina notes: 'In the Halversons' garret many people are sleeping. The gypsy way. The rootless way.' (238). Within months her own apartment has been inundated: 'Fifteen people are staying in our apartment.' (296). It is clear that a sense of identity as a primary family or kin group, rather than merely as a work group, was developing off-stage at an early point in its history.

By contrast, there is little evidence of a collective ethos in the creation of theatre work itself in this period. Productions were more or less conventionally approached and were based on published texts by individual playwrights. Nevertheless, two points are worth noting in relation to group awareness in the Living Theatre. The first has to do with one of their productions, Pirandello's *Tonight We Improvise*, which was first staged by the Living Theatre in 1955 and well received both by audiences and critics. The play itself deconstructs the usual cast-audience relationship. At various points the cast members break the theatrical frame of the fourth wall and appeal to the audience directly, complaining about their restrictions as performers. They also mingle with the audience. In this respect the playwright and actors redefine and enlarge, at least temporarily, the group of people in the performing space, not abiding by the simple performer-spectator dichotomy. This verbal engagement and close contact with the audience, although still a scripted move by the playwright Pirandello, subsequently became a trademark of the Living Theatre in collectively created works such as *Paradise Now*, where it exhorted the audience to disrobe and join the beautiful non-violent anarchist revolution on stage.

The other important factor relates to the membership policy of the Living Theatre. In the early 1950s Beck, at least, seems to have dispensed on certain occasions with conventional auditioning practices in favour of selection based primarily on an aesthetic judgement about physical appearance (Tytell, 1995: 118). The justification for this came, according to Beck, from Piscator's warning about the crippling effect of too much training for actors. Tytell adds that this de-emphasis on training left the Living Theatre open to repeated accusations of amateurism in subsequent years. Beck later quipped that membership effectively depended most heavily upon an ability to endure continuous poverty. This belies the fact that the Living Theatre always retained a core of members who had substantial theatrical training. Many of Beck's public pronouncements need to be treated with caution since he seems to have been given to dissembling remarks

about the more conventional aspects of the theatre's operations in order to reinforce a certain philosophical point rather than to reflect actual practices in the Living Theatre.

In terms of an evolving group ethos one can see this as a first step towards the radical open door policy of group membership that was firmly in place by the mid-sixties in the Living Theatre. From the mid-sixties people could join purely on the basis of an expressed interest in the subject matter of the production and/or the group's anarchist/pacifist lifestyle. Theatre training could be a liability as much as an asset in the view of the Living Theatre's founders, even at this stage.

After the closure of the 100th Street loft there was a lengthy hiatus while a new venue was sought. There were no official Living Theatre performances between 1956 and 1958.<sup>7</sup> The delay was due partly to illness amongst family and friends of Malina and Beck and the emotional toll this took. The pair also engaged in protest activities at this time. On one occasion this led to 30-day jail terms for them both. The hiatus was filled by study of the writings of Joseph Campbell, and Martin Buber, and, less studiously, there was much networking and socialising activity in the arts scene. Links were forged with people such as Maya Deren, John Cage, Merce Cunningham and various Black Mountain College alumni.

These intellectual activities and day-to-day experiences appear to have assisted in the further formation of theatrical ideas, particularly in regard to how to function as a non-hierarchical group. Their brief prison experiences would have helped to cement their perception of the harm that authoritarian institutions cause to the individual. They would also have gained a sense of the 'underclass' as a group in itself, something with which they could empathise. Combined with the general anti-communist paranoia of the 1950s this would have served to convince the pair that, as pacifists, they were part of an invisible outsider group in America society.

#### The Fourteenth Street Theatre as a community resource

It was during this time, particularly during the construction of a new theatre space in what had been a large retail outlet (Hecht's Department Store) on Fourteenth Street, from spring to fall of 1958, that communal praxis entered a new phase for the Living Theatre.<sup>8</sup> The conversion of the Fourteenth Street space was itself a collective enterprise, carried out by willing volunteers numbering some 100 people. The enthusiasm of the volunteers compensated for any lack of construction work experience (Biner, 1971: 39). Although much of the actual renovation work took place in mid-1958, it took some 18 months to open the theatre (it was rented from November 1957). Fundraising depended upon a community of friends and relatives. For

<sup>7</sup> As it has been relayed by Beck, Malina and Tytell, this interlude was a period of philosophical investigation about how to make theatre and live a less materialistic, individualistic existence.

<sup>8</sup> Neff (1970: 4) refers to it as the Living Theatre Playhouse. The street address was 530 Sixth Avenue at Fourteenth Street. She notes that the first three of its four floors were leased by the Living Theatre.

example, the estimated sum required for renovation was \$20,000, and some of the financing, according to Tytell, came from a bequest of \$2,500 by Rosel Malina, Judith Malina's mother, fund-raising dinner parties, a \$1,000 pledge from Mabel Beck, and a \$3,000 pledge from Irving Beck, Beck's mother and father. Things improved further when the fourth floor of building was rented in December 1957 by Merce Cunningham. Partly as a result of this, John Cage donated musical instruments to the new theatre. Paul Williams, a wealthy architect who was a friend of Cage and Cunningham at the time, drafted the official conversion plans, and indeed subsidised a significant portion of the renovations.

The Fourteenth Street conversion was thus akin to a barn-raising exercise, and, for a change, the Living Theatre complied with all local building codes and fire regulations. When not involved in construction work, Beck and Malina often attended lectures during this period, such as the one given by Eric Gutkind on Israeli *Kibbutzim*. They also built upon their readings of anarchism as espoused by Kropotkin and Goodman. Goodman, already a close friend of the pair, and now in effect the house playwright of the Living Theatre, had published a work on inner city planning, co-written with his brother Percival, entitled *Communitas* (first published in 1947 but available in mass market form in early 1950s), arguing for more shared public space in urban design and more experimentation in designs for communities. Some of Goodman's remarks about intentional communities, and the idea of 'the Carnival' taking over the city, prefigure Turner's questions about the spirit of *communitas* in the counterculture of the 1960s.<sup>9</sup> Goodman was a frequent visitor to the Fourteenth Street site during construction of the new space.

Despite this level of solidarity, the Living Theatre was not a permanent company up until this point. Casts and crews changed according to the needs of a particular production, and decisions seem to have been filtered exclusively through discussions between Malina and Beck. This changed during the occupancy of Fourteenth Street, as members from one production began to be routinely carried over to the next, providing the basis for a standing company.

### **The 1959-62 period: making connections with Artaud and Gelber**

#### Artaud

During the period of renovation of the Fourteenth Street building, Beck and Malina were presented with two as yet unpublished pieces of writing. The first was an English translation of Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double*:

M.C.<sup>10</sup> sent us a copy of the book before publication, the summer of 1958, and we opened it and read one line and quickly read it from start to finish, and then again and again. The ghost of

<sup>9</sup> *Communitas* is a bizarrely-illustrated and unorthodox book by the standards of most sociology and planning texts.

<sup>10</sup> This is M.C. Richards, or Mary Richards, the book's translator. Richards had been associated with Black Mountain College and was a colleague of Cage, Cunningham and others with whom Beck and Malina had close and regular contact.

Artaud became our mentor and the problem that we faced as we began work on Fourteenth Street was how to create that spectacle, that Aztec, convulsive, plague-ridden panorama that would so shake people up, so move them, so cause feeling to be felt, there in the body, that the steel world of law and order which civilization had forged to protect itself from barbarism would melt. (Beck, 1965: 24)

Artaud criticises the crippling reliance upon dialogue in conventional European drama:

How does it happen that in the theater, at least in the theater as we know it in Europe, or better in the Occident, everything specifically theatrical, i.e., everything that cannot be expressed in speech, in words, or if you prefer, everything that is not contained in the dialogue ... is left in the background? (1958: 37)

Instead, citing with approval Oriental theatre in general, and Balinese theatre in particular, he advocates a visceral, physically-based Theatre of Cruelty, in which every available faculty and sensory capability of both performer and audience, and every aspect of the available performance environment would be fully explored. The cruelty to which he refers is not that of human-to-human behaviour, but life in an existential sense: 'We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all' (79). The audience should be infected (physical feeling) rather than affected (emotional feeling) by the actors' embodiment of the existential cruelty that underpins daily life. In some respects, Artaud's interdiction 'No more masterpieces!', and a deep suspicion, if not outright rejection, of dialogue, became hallmarks of radical theatre in the 1960s.

Artaud seemed to provide new principles for Western theatre. Along with a radical suspicion of accepted dramatic texts and narrative speech and dialogue in general, Artaud was hostile towards the theatre auditorium as a place for actors and audience to behave in some predetermined way. Anarchic impulse, whether in performer or spectator, was more authentic than analytic reason. Artaud was issuing a command to lift the lid on the very idea of theatre, to free it from the boxed-in conventions of the proscenium stage.

Artaud's dramaturgy was thus more physically spontaneous, and less tendentious, than, say, the theatre of Brecht or Piscator, whom Malina and Beck clearly regarded with great respect in terms of their intellectual ideas and formal approaches to theatre. However, apart from some suggestions on what to enact, Artaud said nothing whatsoever about how to sustain the Theatre of Cruelty as a permanent company, nor did he offer advice on how to carry out this visceral and convulsive activity in a group whose members were beginning to regard each other more or less as a family group. The question of how to stay true to Artaud and survive as a group at the same time is an important one, and it seems to have presented the Living Theatre with a major dilemma in later years. I return to this issue later in the chapter, but for the present it is sufficient to note that from this point in 1958 forward, virtually everything that the Living Theatre did became indexed to Artaud's ideas concerning the theatre and life.

### Gelber

The second unpublished work they were presented with in 1958 was a play by an unknown writer named Jack Gelber. In simple terms *The Connection* is a naturalistic play about a group of real dope addicts and real jazz musicians waiting around for 'Cowboy', their dope-dealer or 'connection'. There are two oscillating types of action: the addicts talk their idle junkie talk; the musicians play what they feel like playing. Beyond that there is little interaction between the two groups. The extra angles are the presence of a movie director and crew, at work trying to film the action as unaffectedly as possible, and the putative author of the film script, Jaybird, who is seated in the audience and who takes issue with the frequent departures from the script made by the actors.

In some respects the play is closer to Beckett than Artaud. Like the characters in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1951) much of the action in *The Connection* involves killing time while the junkies await the arrival of Cowboy. The play does not mirror the apocalyptic action demanded by Artaud in his most vivid exhortations (Gelber seems to have come closer in his second play *The Apple*, discussed below). Yet it is not difficult to see why Gelber's play appealed to Beck and Malina without it contradicting an Artaudian view of the true material with which theatre-goers ought or need to be confronted. Firstly, the play is, if anything, an anti-masterpiece. Gelber does not pretend to offer up metaphysical wisdom from the mouths of these 'low-lives'. The talk is often inconsequential, and when at all contemplative, it reflects a philosophy of the quotidian. Indeed, one could argue that the juxtapositions of the hermetic slices of junkie discourse and the Charlie Parker-influenced jazz sequences are meant to show that music trumps dialogue; words don't matter. In this respect it is consonant with Artaud, who despite his demands for the disordering of the senses on stage, still allowed for music rather than mere cacophony as an alternative to ordinary speech conventions.

Furthermore, there is a sense of physical immediacy about the play. There is a visceral dimension, even in simply observing, to witnessing someone insert a needle in his or her arm. Indeed, if Beck and others are to be believed, the play did more than make the skin crawl: 'Almost fifty men fainted during the run of *The Connection*, not only in America but when it played in Europe, too. Always around the same point. The overdose. Not one admitted it' (Beck, 1965: 27). To the extent that the above shows how both Artaud and a realistic illustration of dope-addict lethargy and ennui could co-exist, there is a logic in the choice of Gelber's work for their first major production at the new theatre.

At the same time it is also important to ask how a work such as *The Connection* contributed to the group paradigm in the Living Theatre at this time. Although it may seem rather arcane, the play does in fact offer a representation of community. In this instance it is a somewhat reluctantly assembled community: junkies and jazz musicians joined by a common interest in heroin. Their mutual interests seem divorced from any of the more sentimental folk notions of belonging that the word community evoked then (and now). Still,

even amongst such outsiders Gelber shows there is a code of ethics, an inherent humanism, and when it is a matter of life or death, warped and awkward though their responses might seem, these people pull together to revive one of their own. Furthermore, it seems that members of the Living Theatre held at least some sincere regard for the communities that the theatre was attempting to bring into the open. Attempts were made to interest the residents of Harlem in the production, and a benefit performance for Narcotics Anonymous took place in 1960. The audience was comprised of social workers, prison staff and city officials, and even the New York Department of Corrections took an interest in the play (Perkins, 1982: 92-93).

*The Connection* also erodes the barrier between actors and audience, firstly through the 'flooding in', as Goffman would term it, of what would normally be regarded as backstage dialogue and behaviour, to the stage. Beck notes that it took considerable effort to de-programme the performers:

There had to be pauses. Directors had to learn to let actors sit still for a long time in one place as in life, and actors had to learn to adapt to this new idea... There had to be slovenly speech. If there was to be jazz, then it had to be real jazz and not show-tune jazz. If there was to be real speech, then there had to be real profanity... We had to risk embarrassment; we had to risk boring the audience, but it had to be done. (1965: 26)

This realism was part of Gelber's script. The playwright's depiction of the tedium of junkie existence is relatively matter of fact and he withholds judgement on the characters and their pace of life. Similarly, while Beck talks about being real, it is not linked to the intense psychological realism demanded by a method acting approach. It is instead an altogether more passive reality within the soft white underbelly of society. The audience is afforded an insight into the culture of a minority group that few would want to acknowledge as a real phenomenon.

To this end the actors were encouraged to play with the audience's sense of what was rehearsed and what was not. Also the physical boundaries between actors and audience were breached in the play:

The direction taken by the actors, which combined real and sham improvisation, disoriented the audience; at times they were taken in completely . . . Audience invariably applauded the actor who was presented to them at the beginning of the play as 'Jaybird, the author of *The Connection*'. In the same vein, make-believe and reality were deliberately blended by Judith during the intermission, when the actors mingled with the audience, asking for a fix in the characteristic tone and manner of addicts. (Biner, 1971: 48)

This constant dissembling with respect to roles, to the real narrative, indeed, the real authorship of the play, could be seen as an attempt to dupe the audience. However, neither Gelber nor the Living Theatre were trying to exclude the audience in *The Connection*. On the contrary, it is an oddly inclusive play, despite its subject matter. Everyone attending the performance was meant to enjoy the music. The play provides a dwelling alongside experience, but it avoids the pretence of a romanticised fellowship in the auditorium. It is neither a sentimentalised plea for minority rights nor an assemblage of meaningless chit-chat. Their group identity emerges from their existential position. Similarly, the musicians in *The Connection* eschew

conventional small talk. They save their energies for non-verbal communication, and when they talk it is a group conversation in music. It is worth noting that the small-scale jazz ensemble prefigures the emergence of the pop/rock trio/quartet/quintet phenomenon of the late 1950s coalesced quickly into the more amorphous rock group tradition during the 1960s (See Chapter Three). *The Connection* is thus something of an open house experience.

Reflecting upon the production some years later, Gelber himself was struck by the open way in the work was constructed:

The play went into production around April 1959. I stayed away, but then I called them up. They seemed to be desperate, panicky. They wanted me to come down to the theater on Fourteenth Street immediately. They were looking for me. So I went down and they asked me if I knew any Negro actors, and did I know any jazz musicians. Suddenly, I was completely involved and it was a terrific self-education, self-indoctrination, a learn-as-you-go thing. I suddenly felt very worthwhile. I mean, I was doing real work and I was very good at it. I learned about acting, about actors, about the theater. *The Connection* needed fifteen actors in it, but I saw literally thousands of actors. Finally, we cast it. Judith directed it. She's a very good director, although she gives you the illusion that 'anything goes'. (Gelber qtd. in Gruen, 1972: 98-99)

The play opened in July 1959 and was performed more than 700 times over the ensuing two-and-a-half years. After initial critical rejection it became an Off-Broadway hit, winning an 'Obie' (an annual *Village Voice* critics' award) for Gelber and actor Warren Finnerty who played Leach, the junkie den-mother. It toured briefly in Europe in June 1961 to critical acclaim. An unauthorised film version was made by an up and coming New York film-maker, Shirley Clarke (Clarke, 1960), and this was widely seen.

As a consequence of this success Gelber delivered another play to Beck and Malina, entitled *The Apple* (1961). The play was written specifically with the Living Theatre in mind, and it was duly staged by the group, but, despite a few favourable reviews, it ran for only a short season (December 1961-January 1962). *The Apple* was quickly sidelined by the group in favour of a new project, Brecht's *Man is Man* (1962). According to one unofficial observer, Ken Dewey, creator of Happenings in New York and elsewhere in the early 1960s, the Living Theatre was more at fault than Gelber:

It's a fantastically deep play. He's talking about democracy as opposed to dictatorships. This is the point. You have to go through the play to get into the ground underneath it. Gelber missed in the couple of key places, and that's why it's such a difficult play. When I saw it, the opening of preview week, it was going down exactly as he had written the play. It was a group coming together. Judith Malina was going up the wall over details, the set was falling down, the whole production was so outside the play that it was sort of a big staged happening. I went back three times to see it, and it got tighter and tighter and duller and more awful. (Dewey qtd. in Kostelanetz, 1968: 169)

Dewey staged the play himself shortly afterwards in Los Angeles. His description of its essential sub-text is noteworthy because it evokes the group paradigm of the late 1960s:

You had this quasi-democracy, where everybody is free to do what he wants. Then, the group gets introverted and incestuous and ingrown; then it begins to disintegrate. What Gelber does is pick the point at which such a group is falling apart because of incoherence at its center. Then, he

introduces the fascistic individual, who is falling apart the other way – he has too much of the control and self-discipline that they need. So, these two forces interact with each other in various ways. Initially, they attack each other. In the second section, however, almost by accident, they improvise together . . . Two political systems have collided; and since that social theme was sufficiently there, I pushed the human terms – the interrelationships between the characters, trying to evolve a collaborative, rather than hierarchical, system. (171)

Whether or not the Living Theatre saw this as the main point of the play is unclear. Without using the term *communitas* Dewey seems to point to the inevitable conflict, described by Turner, when people wish to prolong indefinitely the experience of an existential *communitas*: How, normatively and ideologically, to maintain some semblance of order? Or, in Weinberg's terms, how to hold the 'center' without violating the rights of any member of the group? In any event, Dewey's precis of *The Apple* seems uncannily like a description of all three radical theatre groups, the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group, leading up to the end of the decade. In the case of the latter two groups, accusations were levelled at their leaders to the effect that they were indeed fascistic individuals.

Dewey's description also connects with a fundamental aspect of group process regarding leadership, particularly Bion's fight/flight group response around the presence (or absence) of a leader. This underscores an aspect of Happenings that has perhaps become obscured. Many think of these events very much as a follow the leader phenomenon, where an artist dictates instructions to spectators, or merely gives them room to play as individuals. However, one could argue that a more serious question about 'Who is the leader?' lies at the heart of such events. The events themselves happen to create new groups of spectators and artists, deliberately ephemerally, and during the life of the event a relatively undefined group process and structure exist. In this sense Happenings may be seen as an embodiment of the dialectic within any participatory democracy: how to find coherent direction without especially empowered leaders.

As it happened, there were no more collaborations with Gelber. The Living Theatre went on to work with another new American playwright, Kenneth Brown, in 1963, to produce *The Brig*, a ground-breaking work which focussed upon group process in a very extreme way.

### **The 1963-64 period: Theatre of Cruelty in a group and *The Brig***

Accounts conflict as to who delivered the script of *The Brig*, to Malina and Beck in January 1963, but as with *The Connection*, the decision to stage it was more or less instantaneous.<sup>11</sup> The play had been written as a result of Brown's stint in a Marine Corps brig at Camp Fujiyama, Japan, in 1956. He felt sufficiently moved to express in written form the harsh treatment of prisoners he witnessed, eventually deciding upon a play/film treatment. In some respects *The Brig* is indeed a distillation of the routine experiences of Marines

<sup>11</sup> Tytell (1995: 179) identifies Al Hansen, a New York Happenings artist, as the courier of Brown's script but others, such as Perkins (1982: 105), claim that Brown mailed it directly to Beck.



unlucky enough to find themselves in military prison during their enlistment. On another level, it adds a new dimension to existential themes in drama and literature in the post-WWII period. Exchanges between existential individuals are replaced by existential exchanges between groups, but in such a narrow vein of hostility and fear that it makes for an almost perfect example of the Theatre of Cruelty demanded by Artaud, and sought by Beck and Malina.

The play has little by way of plot and no back-narrative (e.g., How did the prisoners get there? How did the guards get there?). There is no characterisation, nor is there character development through dialogue or interior psychological narrative. The prisoners have numbers rather than names. Even the guards rarely refer to each other by name. It is simply a day-in-the-life of the prisoners and guards of the brig, and action is almost entirely limited to routines between prisoners and guards as the former are sadistically put through their paces. The dialogue consists almost entirely of orders barked out by the guards, which prompt immediate actions and/or verbal or responses from the prisoners, almost invariably including a request to cross one of the painted white lines on the floor that seem to mark out the territory of one of the guards. The play is divided into episodes of different points in the day, starting at 4:00 a.m. and ending at around 7:30 p.m., after the evening meal and a half-hour for letter-writing. Despite the breaks between scenes, the overall impression is that the prisoners are in a constant and breathless state of running (literally, with their fists drawn in parallel to their shoulders, giving them the appearance of flightless birds) from one station (e.g., standing by their bunks with *The Guidebook for Marines* open in front of them as if standing in church with a prayer or hymn book) or activity (e.g., washing and scrubbing the floors) to another. They repeat, reverse and change these activities according to what appear only to be the whims of the guards on this particular day. Accompanying these routines is the constant possibility of making a minor mistake (e.g., dropping a spade, or replying to a question in other than in a 'Yes, sir' or 'No, sir' manner), or being singled out for no apparent reason for hostile attention, either of which inevitably results in an act of summary violence (usually a blow to the abdomen).

*The Brig* builds on the precedent set by the Living Theatre in the staging of *The Connection*. It opens up for view the day-to-day existence of another group of outsiders, the men here labelled as criminals within the often-closed world of the Marine Corps. Just as many of those who went to see *The Connection* and found a semblance of social order with which they were in all likelihood quite unfamiliar, those seeing *The Brig* were confronted with a less familiar version of military life than recruitment campaigns and Hollywood movies would normally project.

Unlike *The Connection*, however, there is little that connects the men with each other as human beings in *The Brig*. Gone are any notions of camaraderie and sentimental bonding between the professional defenders of the nation. Instead a study in systematic victimisation appears, almost like a mechanical ballet of brutality between the prisoners and the guards. The men behave like automata. The type of group dynamic

depicted is more explicitly inter-group than intra-group. The audience is forced to witness one characterless group victimise another. The underlying fact that these men have started out on the same side as members of a larger group of marines serving their country overseas becomes lost in the frenzy of discipline and punishment.

The audience is left to speculate about the crimes these prisoners have committed that would warrant such punishment. Similarly, the degree of co-operation and compassion that could exist between prisoners (or between guards for that matter) in such a violent setting remains unrepresented. Yet despite the severe distortion of normal human relationships in *The Brig*, it still affords an insight into human group life. One of the prisoners breaks ranks, causing great anxiety until he is subdued, raising questions for everyone, prisoners, guards and audience, about conformity and non-conformity. In fact, although it is of no material comfort to them, all of the prisoners must in some way qualify as members of a special group of non-conformists; otherwise they would not have been locked up. Brown implies that as people prepared to buck the system, their failure to be good Marines is perhaps more a moral virtue than a shortcoming.

The play created a great impact when it opened in May 1963. Even in the midst of some initial critical disparagement, the humanitarian questions raised by the work provoked public anxiety about whether or not this depiction of cruelty was true to life. Howard Taubman, writing in the *Times*, dismissed the play as poor theatre, but demanded an official inquiry.<sup>12</sup> Marines were interviewed as to whether brig life was as brutal as depicted, many saying that it might have been true when Brown was there, but that it was less barbaric in the 1960s. Nevertheless, it was a well-attended production. Malina received an Obie for her directing, and the play looked set to become a long-running success until closure of the Fourteenth Street theatre interfered with Living Theatre plans. To the extent that the play reached the audience on a visceral, rather than an intellectual level, it achieved what Artaud would have sought himself, a moment of revulsion transformed into compassion.

For the purpose of understanding the development of the Living Theatre as a group at this time it is important to consider the rehearsal approach taken by Malina. Much of the process of rehearsal was based upon actual Marine regulations as set out in *The Guidebook for Marines*. In addition, seven rules, concerning punctuality, civility, clothing, and penalties for various infractions, were drawn up by Malina. In her notes on 'Directing *The Brig*' Malina describes how, paradoxically, the rules of engagement in rehearsal and the sheer dread of the actors at the inhuman spaces they were required to occupy, created a sense of togetherness:

Each one came to me to tell me of his own experience and they gathered together to talk each one of his terror of playing *The Brig*. The ordeal swept over us. We were all afraid. In the breaks we came closer and closer as we huddled together in small groups describing to each other the intricacies of this serious endeavour. (1965: 96)

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<sup>12</sup> An official investigation was apparently conducted (Perkins, 1982: 116) but details of the results are difficult to find.

This approach represented a direct challenge to the status of the actor, who in a hierarchical theatre group, could, as senior, or star actor, expect to be cosseted or courted by directors, stage managers, and other actors. Malina's approach crossed the line between on-stage and off-stage to reinforce the fact that in the brig there are no names and no differences in appearance; everyone has their identity reduced to a single formula.<sup>13</sup> This anonymity, combined with their abject, impotent status, affords the characters, ironically, an interesting group identity, i.e., they are a group of men deprived of personalities. In *The Connection*, the groups of men have an odd kind of solidarity that is acknowledged by their mutual tolerance and even encouragement for their respective idiosyncrasies. They mock each other, but they have also clearly studied each other, and can read one another well. Furthermore, they close ranks during the crisis moment when Leach overdoses. There is a sense of organic wholeness, even community, in *The Connection*.

In *The Brig*, the sense of wholeness and solidarity appears only through unflinching discipline, and clearly such discipline could not be casually arrived at, hence the extreme rules in rehearsal. However, realising that Living Theatre actors, as actors and associates, were already far more independent in their thought processes, than *The Guidelines for Marines* allow for, Malina created 'safe spaces' of time out for the group. This was explicitly and formally done to allow them to step out of their roles, but as a group, not as individuals. This reinforced the sense of belonging to the group. In doing so, Malina went a step further than other American directors who, in a similar situation might require individual actors to research their parts by living the lives of their characters day and night, or get them to spend time in a real prison. Malina created an entirely hermetic situation, where all resources had to be found from within the cast. When interviewed by Richard Schechner soon after the closing of the Fourteenth Street theatre about use of the Method or technique she replied:

We used everything we knew. Some actors work by the Method, some actors work by technique. We certainly all worked very closely in the same way, whether our background was Stanislavski or otherwise. We have never found this to be a problem at the Living Theatre. There is a hewing to a line of honesty and direct open experience – we try to communicate that. Each actor will find his own means. As a director I can work within the vocabulary of Stanislavski or outside it. I don't particularly use it except where the actor's background makes it very useful. No – I don't think we used the Method. I think that the extreme physical demands of *The Brig* are such as to immediately pre-set a kind of technique – each actor revivifies a life experience here and now on the stage as he performs. (Malina qtd. in Schechner, 1964a: 210-11)

*The Brig* seems to have been a watershed moment in the development of the Living Theatre as a group. When Brown was asked, in the same interview by Schechner, about the special loyalty that surrounded the Living Theatre as an entity he commented:

The Living Theatre ceased to be an organization in my mind when *The Brig* began to work. It was no longer a play being performed by actors on a stage. It was an experience by actors seeking perfection of an art, as opposed to actors seeking ego satisfaction, or whatever the minor things are for which men act on a stage. Then we started, after about the thirtieth performance, to become a family. I mean a family in that we all began to love each other. We all began to appreciate each

<sup>13</sup> The cast of characters is specific in detail only insofar as the men are meant to represent a 'cross-section of American society' (Brown, 1965: 48).

other's talents as well as each other's faults. And we became so involved in the play that we stayed in the theatre long into the night and sometimes long into the next day discussing what we had done, what were the possibilities, what was to be done the next night. After a while we lost sight of the play completely and we discussed only its universal meanings. And it is quite a thing when one can talk about something on a universal level in the company of twenty or thirty people and be able to understand exactly what that other person is talking about. To put it as we put it: we reached a point where we were getting into each other's heads. Then suddenly we were closed by the Federal Government. (Brown qtd. in Schechner, 1964a: 213)

When asked about the directing and rehearsal style in the Living Theatre, Brown's response was similarly positive:

They almost – with necessary exceptions – allow the play to take its own course. Judith directs inasmuch as she chooses what is very close to the perfect company. After choosing the company, she casts the proper vibrations over their heads and they go their own way from there. When I say 'Go their own way' I don't wish to be misunderstood and the reason it's one way is that the people are very carefully chosen and there is a certain understanding of love in the world which some people have and others, unfortunately, do not have – or fortunately, I don't know yet. (215)

His remarks were made in 1964, but read not unlike an interview with a hippie communitarian of the late 1960s. To that extent the Living Theatre was already on a 'togetherness' trip in the early 1960s both on and off stage, even if it had yet to become a collective or commune. And while Malina and Beck still retained, at this point, discretion over casting, the membership of the group had already stabilised. Most of the actors in the company at the time of *The Brig*, including Steven Ben Israel, Rufus Collins, Henry Howard, William Finnerty, Gary Goodrow, Jim Tiroff, Jenny Hecht, Mel Clay, Mary Krapf, and Luke Theodore, travelled to Europe and remained with the Living Theatre for several years. Indeed, a few remained well into the 1970s when the Living Theatre was based in New York and Pittsburgh.

### **The Living Theatre as a community and a community organisation**

The Living Theatre's tenancy at Fourteenth Street in the early 1960s shows a pattern of consolidation. The group appeared to be putting down roots and gaining community respect. Admittedly, the choice of material, as with earlier productions, showed a certain deference towards avant-garde conventions. Nevertheless, even these choices added to the sheer experience of staging different works as a group. Thus, from a modest beginning in 1951 until the opening of *The Brig* in 1963, some 22 productions comprising 29 plays were put up by the Living Theatre in New York (Biner, 1971: 29).<sup>14</sup>

The Fourteenth Street theatre also served as a venue for poetry readings, theatre events, Happenings, book launches, lectures, parties, and other events, providing showcases for people such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack

<sup>14</sup> Nine different productions were staged at the Fourteenth Street venue, including works by William Carlos Williams (*Many Loves*), Paul Goodman (*The Cave at Machpelah*), Bertolt Brecht (*In the Jungle of Cities*, *Man is Man*), Pirandello (*Tonight We Improvise*), Jackson MacLow (*The Marrying Maiden*), and Ezra Pound (*Women of Trachis*). Furthermore, sufficient financial support was found from within the local community to send the entire company, never less than twenty-five in number, on two short European tours, one in June 1961 (*The Connection*, *Many Loves*, *In the Jungle of Cities*), the other in April and May of 1962 (*The Connection*, *The Apple*, *In the Jungle of Cities*).

Kerouac, Diane DiPrima, Frank O'Hara, Gregory Corso, Edward Dahlberg, Josephine Herbst, Charles Mingus, Eric Bentley, Maya Deren and Joseph Campbell. To some extent this was part of the general Off-Off-Broadway ethos of creating artistic community centres that had firmly taken root in New York (cafes, lofts, churches as theatres), and which the Living Theatre had prefigured in its One Hundredth Street phase in the early 1950s. However, the people who appeared at Fourteenth Street were clearly close friends and supporters of the Living Theatre, and as Banes (1993) has pointed out, the Living Theatre was an exceptional example of facilitation of art in the community:

The Living Theater served as a town hall, not just for the community of artists, but for the larger Villagers. And the Living Theater's influence in the theater community reached much further than their own plays, since two of the most influential Off-Off-Broadway groups, the Open Theater and the Judson Poets' Theater, had former Living Theater members at their helms. In addition to these two direct progeny, many more groups followed the examples that the Living Theater set for experimenting with both artistic and social forms. (42)

Whatever the pattern of consolidation and community building in the early 1960s this changed in the latter part of 1963. An extended season of *The Brig* was in progress when occupancy of Fourteenth Street was terminated (on October 18) amid protest, controversy and much publicity. A hastily arranged, but well-executed filming of the play was carried out in a clandestine operation by Fluxus-linked cinematographer Jonas Mekas (Mekas, 1964). The tension was heightened by the actual seizure of the building by the Internal Revenue Service, on the grounds of non-payment of income tax arrears, insurance, and penalties owing. Beck made repeated claims that the eviction was nothing less than government persecution and was not due to (his) bad management. Opinions in the theatre world differed, as a special issue of *The Drama Review* on the Living Theatre (8: 3 [Spring 1964]) clearly illustrates. In this special issue there is an essay by Beck on the financing of the Living Theatre, entitled 'How to Close a Theatre' (pp. 180-84). Here Beck offers a lengthy apologia for the theatre's financial battles. Beck concedes that the theatre had been conceived as a *bona fide* business concern at its inception, but argues that it evolved into something different over a period of some 15 years as it battled the forces of Mammon and the commercial economy of Broadway. Other commentators in the special issue, such as Mee (1964) and Schechner (1964b), although sympathetic to the Living Theatre, take issue with this analysis.

Whether or not there was any truth in Beck's claims, the fact remains that it was Beck who made all or most of the financial decisions for the Living Theatre during its early years in New York. From a group structure point of view, Beck held a powerful and dominating position, in spite of changes that were taking place within the group as a communal entity and in spite of changes in approach to the creation of work. Equality within the group did not, at this stage, extend to how funds were to be allocated. Beck retained what many feminists would regard as a characteristically paternal form of control over finances.

Also, although Beck was quick to acknowledge financial support from the local artistic community, little was said about the status of the Living Theatre as an insider group within the larger outsider or bohemian

community of Greenwich Village, and how much this mattered. In other words, with such strong local support and with such a reputation for fostering the efforts of other artists it does not automatically follow that exile to Europe, the course of action that was chosen in 1964, was the only possible outcome of problems with tax payment and compliance with local building ordinances. Tytell notes that Malina regarded the departing group as explicitly refugees rather than travellers. (Tytell, 1995: 197). As Biner notes, its members were anything but victims; leaving the United States was a strategic choice:

After London, sensing that for some time the European public would demonstrate an exceptional interest in their work, as it had already done in 1961 and 1962, the Living Theatre decided to spend more time in Europe. The European press spoke of a troupe chased from the United States for extremist political positions. How could a government chase its own citizens from its shores? It would have to mean that the citizens were deprived of their nationality, which was not the case. The Living Theatre chose its exile. (1971: 83)

The decision was no doubt influenced by positive feedback from two earlier European tours, where audiences responded very well to the Living Theatre. However, although both tours had been by invitation, they were not underwritten by sponsors in Europe wanting to book the Living Theatre. Indeed, virtually all of the money for these ventures appears to have come from American sources, without any expectation of repayment. Given that Europe did not beckon the Living Theatre with an open chequebook, so to speak, and that much patronage came from American sources, there must have been other factors influencing the decision to leave.

An obvious consideration was the fact that the Inland Revenue Service did not tax Americans abroad earning less than \$20,000 per annum. Beyond this pragmatic consideration there was perhaps a deliberate decision to seek estrangement from society at large. The Living Theatre as a unique entity, battling the forces of the Establishment, held a certain romantic appeal. Such a perception of a larger foe, or superordinate threat, as Kanter (1972) points out on several occasions, is a crucial tenet for a successful communal group. Thus, as part of its evolution as a cohesive group it was probably necessary to develop a sense of trenchant opposition to larger forces within society, even to the point of disavowing any kind of belonging to a kindred community at all. Whether one interprets this as typical 'groupthink', a group-affirming collective belief, immune to contradiction by outside counter-evidence from external sources, or as a manifestation of the flight response in Bion's basic-assumption group, it remains something of a moot point as to whether or not the Living Theatre's departure from America was unavoidable.

It is also important to remember that only part of the Living Theatre left the United States in August 1964. An offshoot of the Living Theatre, known as the Open Theatre, was formed in February 1963, principally by Joseph Chaikin, Lee Worley, and Peter Feldman. Chaikin had taken part in the Living Theatre tours of 1961 and 1962. The decision to form a new group was based on the belief that it was more important to work as a stationary theatre, experimenting with local content and ensemble activities, than it was to develop repertory for periodic touring overseas (See Schechner [1964c]). This reflected a divergence in

philosophy, not so much about politics or aesthetics, since all seemed to share New Left attitudes and felt hostility towards the ossified theatre of Broadway. Instead, the major disagreement concerned what can be termed situatedness of the group. Chaikin and other people who formed the Open Theatre believed that a group could not function without belonging within a particular cultural context. For Beck and Malina, on the other hand, it seems to have been more important at this time to promote the idea of free-ranging utopian community that belonged nowhere.

In any case, a strong communal identity was in evidence within the Living Theatre between the closure of the Fourteenth Street theatre in October 1963 and departure for Europe by the group in August 1964, a period of some nine months. During this time some of the company members began living at Malina and Beck's West End Avenue apartment, others in Jim Tiroff's Bowery loft, and another part of the group lived in a large house on Long Island.

Despite an overall increase in internal group solidarity, regard for the playwright seems to have begun to change. Gelber was conscious of being on the outside of the group: 'For one thing, the Becks, because they were so politically minded, realized I wasn't of their ilk. And I wasn't sexually of their ilk. I always felt that they cut me out of their central thinking, as they never did Paul Goodman, or even Kenneth Brown (who wrote *The Brig*) a little later' (Gelber qtd. in Gruen, 1972: 101). Gelber sees his position as singular isolation compared to other writers. One could argue that the perceived need for a playwright was beginning to fade within the Living Theatre regardless of personalities. Whatever the insider standing enjoyed by Goodman and Brown at this time, after 1964 the individual *bona fide* playwright had ceased to play a significant part in the Living Theatre as an active group member. This may have reflected the Living Theatre's eagerness to remain faithful to Artaud's proscription against deference to the text and his contempt for the notion of any written play as a masterpiece. There was also a general challenge to prior authority that characterised countercultural attitudes in the 1960s. Although Gelber seems to have taken it personally, many playwrights found their status as authors undermined as the decade progressed, and the Living Theatre, having staged several playwright-based works in its early years, could at least claim to having worked through the convention before rejecting it.

Other radical theatre groups of the time that were dedicated to a group-based approach also wrestled with this issue. Do you need to start with a blank page in order for the process to be equal? The Open Theatre, for example, seems to have accepted, as a matter of principle, the presence of the playwright within the working process of the ensemble, even though it caused major difficulties for and with writers such as Megan Terry, Jean-Claude Van Itallie, and Susan Yankowitz.<sup>15</sup> Put another way, one could ask if the Living Theatre burnt several bridges when it left the United States in 1964, including the goodwill of those who could write material for it to realise collectively.

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<sup>15</sup> See Rieser (1982: 183-90) for an outline of the conflicts between playwrights and the Open Theatre ensemble.

### Europe 1964-68: the era of collective creation

And the theatre was closed in New York and we came to Europe and we found ourselves in a situation, in which the situation itself really dictated the terms. We didn't have to accept them, we could have dispersed and disbanded, but we simply felt that we could continue if we could get rid of all the bullshit of: every week every actor in the company has got to have X amount of money, and you pay only the actors that are working, like she's working so she gets paid but there's a cat that she's living with . . . and therefore the two of them must make good on the money that she has because he really isn't in the play. But we felt that all of that had to go so that no matter whether it was a play with three or twenty people or eighteen people or twenty seven or thirty people, no matter how many people are in the play that is going on, it supports this whole community, the community is based on itself. (Beck qtd. in Bissinger, 1967: 6)

The entourage that left America for Europe in August of 1964 numbered approximately 25 people, virtually the entire company. Upon departure from the United States the only concrete obligation was a six-week season of *The Brig* in London at the Mermaid Theatre starting in September. Upon completion of this engagement it was understood that Beck and Malina would be recalled to serve jail terms in America for the convictions handed down in July over the IRS charges and the closure of the Fourteenth Street Theatre.<sup>16</sup>

London performances of *The Brig* appear to have drawn good houses, although press reviews were generally negative. The season, initially organised by Oscar Lewenstein, a promoter who had been involved in the bookings of the earlier tours in 1961 and 1962, was cut short by the owner of the Mermaid, Bernard Miles.<sup>17</sup> There were rumours that the American Embassy had pressured Miles, or that the business committee of the Mermaid had objected to the work, or that the authorities had somehow intervened. After picketing the theatre the group was paid for the remainder of the season, apparently on the pre-condition that it left England (Tytell, 1995: 198).

The future had been uncertain enough without the premature end to the London season. *The Brig* was taken to Brussels, Antwerp, Basel and Berlin in November, although this only added another eight performances to the record.<sup>18</sup> Rather than being welcomed with open arms and generous offers of facilities the Living Theatre appears to have struggled for resources from the very beginning of its European sojourn. In preparation for the London season the group had rehearsed there for most of August, and the straitened circumstances quickly proved too much for some members. According to Tytell: 'Money was very limited, and there was grumbling. One actor left because he found a better offer; another received an urgent message from home; Warren Finnerty's wife was threatening to leave him, and he had to return' (1995: 197). Another actor observed: 'The Living Theatre wipes out about two people a month' (Henry Howard

<sup>16</sup> Beck served a 60-day sentence at Danbury Federal Penitentiary in Connecticut from mid-December 1964 until mid-February 1965, while Malina served 30 days at Passaic County Jail in New Jersey within the same period.

<sup>17</sup> Reports conflict as to whether the season closed after three weeks or four. The dates for performance that have been chronicled would suggest a 25-night season of some 43 performances (see Appendix I).

<sup>18</sup> As it turned out *The Brig* was kept in repertory until March 1967, eventually totaling some 106 performances in Europe, making it the Living Theatre's third most frequently performed work behind *Mysteries* (260) and *Antigone* (170).



qtd. in Smith, 1969: 10). Also, group members seemed to revel in minor acts of provocation, not only at the authorities, but at the general public. It seems as if a decision had already been made that the group was a community unto itself. The perceived experience at the hands of the establishment somehow gave them licence to ignore not only local laws, but local customs as well.

In terms of the group and its sense of collectivity, a key event, revolving around the creation of a new work, took place in the latter part of 1964. Following the completion of the London season, the Living Theatre sought somewhere to rehearse in Paris, as there were ideas afoot to stage Jean Genet's *The Maids* and *The Balcony*. This led to an offer of accommodation in October from the American Center for Students and Artists, in return for a performance/training event of the Living Theatre's own choosing. The offer was gratefully accepted. It was quickly decided that there was nothing to be gained by presenting scenes from *The Brig* or other older works from repertory. Instead a new piece was created over a period of several days.

#### *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces: a collage creation*

The new work was entitled *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*. It came into being as an act of reciprocation between one group and another. One actor commented: 'The director of the Student Center asked us to do a show, and we decided to give them a gift. It was beautiful. We made the *Mysteries* in two or three days, a few hours each day' (Roy Harris qtd. in Smith, 1969: 132). Another explained: 'The *Mysteries* wasn't designed to be a psychic wipe-out. It was made as a benefit, to say thank you for your theatre' (Henry Howard qtd. in Smith, 1969: 110).

The structure of the work showed an evolving sense of collectivity on stage as opposed to a focus on the personal lives or interior narratives of any individual character. In creating the work Biner notes that Beck and Malina had some 20 possible components from which to choose (1971: 84). They chose nine, dividing the groupings into two parts. How these choices were made is less significant than the fact that what was chosen symbolically represented the dialectic between plurality and individuality on stage in a non-literary, but not entirely de-vocalised manner. (The structure and content of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* are outlined in Figure 4.1 on page 102)

Part One involves what can be called preparatory sequences. The first two pieces begin with a focus upon the singular person or voice, surrounded or augmented by group activities. 'The Brig Dollar' pounds out physical and linguistic collective actions around a mute individual in an absurd manner. 'The Raga' reverses this, where a lone voice finds collective support.

Figure 4.1 The structure and content of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*

<b>MYSTERIES AND SMALLER PIECES</b>	
<p><i>Mysteries and Smaller Pieces</i> is structured in two parts, the first consists of six pieces:</p> <p><b>1. <i>The Brig Dollar</i></b> An actor stands motionless in a dim spotlight in the centre of the stage. He/she remains there, without moving, during the entire piece. Several minutes after he/she has taken his position, a group of actors who have been standing on attention in the rear of the auditorium begin marching toward the stage and the houselights come up. Reaching the stage, they mime a field-day cleaning sequence from <i>The Brig</i>. Meanwhile, stationed along the walls of the theatre, another group of actors read aloud all of the words printed on a dollar bill. The actors on stage drill in formation, until the 'corporal' steps forward and shouts an unintelligible order: frozen on attention, the actors shout back in unison YESSIR! Blackout.</p> <p><b>2. <i>The Raga</i></b> The theatre is in complete darkness. A woman's voice begins an improvisation of a Hindu song, accompanied by a guitar. This brief but intense piece merges into the next one (Developed by Nona Howard and Roy Harris).</p> <p><b>3. <i>The Incense</i></b> The theatre is still in darkness; slowly tiny dots of light appear on stage where the actors are grouping and slowly moving toward the audience. As the scent of incense drifts through the room, the houselights go on, and the actors, holding sticks of incense in their hands, continue in procession, slowly descending the stage and moving up the aisles to the rear of the theatre (Nicola Cernovich, former lighting designer, had done similar in an earlier production).</p> <p><b>4. <i>Street Songs</i></b> Julian, seated cross-legged in the center of the stage, announces 'Street Songs... by Jackson MacLow' and starts to intone current revolutionary Slogans: Abolish money, Abolish police, Change the world, Fuck for Peace, Free all men, etc. The actors, from the rear of the theatre or from among the spectators, soon begin to repeat the slogans and members of the audience usually join in too.</p> <p>Continuing their chant, the actors slowly move back to the stage and form a circle with arms on each other's shoulders.</p> <p><b>5. <i>The Chord</i></b> The actors in the circle start to breathe slowly, tuning into their neighbors' breathing rhythm; this builds up into a humming, until the maximum volume-intensity peak is reached. [An adaptation of an exercise introduced by Joe Chaikin, a former member of the Living Theatre, and founder of the Open Theatre] Following the same organic process, the chant decreases, fading into silence. This piece is about 'coming together', or the beauty of communion.</p> <p><b>6. <i>The Lion</i></b> This is a yoga breathing exercise, which six to eight actors perform on the edge of the stage. Intriguing to the uninitiated spectator, it is a kind of physiological message, hinting the need of total purification of the body as well as of the mind (Developed by Steven Ben Israel).</p>	<p>The second part of <i>Mysteries and Smaller Pieces</i> consists of three pieces:</p> <p><b>1. <i>Tableaux Vivants</i></b> A series of flashes, performed by six groups of four actors each, who improvise compositions within the framework of four wooden boxes set one next to the other, vertically, the open side facing the public. The lights are turned on and off rhythmically every few seconds: during the brief instants of darkness the actors change compositions and expressions (Developed by Beck, after Artaud).</p> <p><b>2. <i>Lee's Piece</i></b> A sound-and-movement piece, conceived as an exercise by Lee Worley of the Open Theatre. On the sides of the stage, two groups of actors line up, one in front of the other. An actor improvises a gesture and/or a sound and 'gives' it to the performer in front of him or her. This one picks it up, transforms it into a new expression and passes it on to another actor. This exchange goes on in crescendo until an actor, finally, catches the movement and sound that suits the feelings and moods of all the others, who join him or her. The piece ends with this collective, exultant participation.</p> <p><b>3. <i>The Plague</i></b> Inspired by Artaud's description of a plague epidemic, this final piece is the very embodiment of his theatrical philosophy. It is an exorcism of death as well as a warning, an attempt to make us aware of the state of emergency we have reached. On a dimly lit stage we witness an apocalyptic vision;</p> <p>...[bodies] seized by a terrible fatigue, the fatigue of a centralized magnetic suction, of molecules divided and drawn toward their annihilation ... crazed body fluids, unsettled and commingled, seem to be flooding through the flesh. The gorge rises, the inside of the stomach seems as if it were trying to gush out between the teeth ... eyes, first inflamed, then glazed; ... swollen gasping tongue, first white, then red, then black, as if charred and split ... everything proclaims an unprecedented organic upheaval... <i>The body fluids, furrowed like the earth struck by lightning, like lava kneaded by subterranean forces, search for an outlet.</i></p> <p><b>Artaud, The Theatre and its Double. New York: Grove Press</b></p> <p>Now there are bodies all over, scattered on stage, in the aisles, collapsed among the spectators. Finally, they are all dead... Silence. Slowly some of the dead rise and begin to recompose the other contorted bodies. One by one the rigid bodies are carried on stage, they are piled up until the pyramid of corpses is completed: the dead have buried the dead. All disappears in darkness.</p> <p>(Adapted from Rostagno, 1970: 80-81)</p>

The third piece, 'The Incense', is an altogether silent form of coming together, the actors advancing abreast towards the audience, creating a fusion between both by means of dispersal of the smoke from incense sticks. The fourth piece, 'Street Songs', returns to the lone individual as focus, center stage. Other actors join the audience and then reply to the utterances of the central figure. The intent is to involve the audience in the dialogue. The fifth piece, 'The Chord', is arguably the most powerful embodiment of the group identity. The actors form a circle on stage, shoulders locked, and begin a series of ever-intensifying intonings. They are a single being with a single sound. The acoustic and visual effect was, by all accounts, impressive. Interestingly, this piece did not originate with the Living Theatre, and was intended more for warm-up than for performance:

With Chaikin, the chord has been used mainly in exercises; for the Living Theatre it became a 'coming together' device; a profound expression of belonging to the community; the human community in general, the company in particular. When an actor returns after an absence, his reintegration is symbolized in the ceremony of the chord. (Biner, 1971: 88)

The Living Theatre used this exercise to draw audience members into this 'coming together'. The sixth piece, 'The Lion', is another group activity, this time showing a ritual purification through yoga, without reference to any conventional spoken sound. The actors work in unison, however, reinforcing the sense of a collective mind.

Part Two signals the beginning of greater kinetic interaction between performers and a more elevated sense of pleasure and pain. The seventh piece, 'Tableaux Vivants', creates four grotesque groupings of six, locked within wooden frames. Although not harmonious in the picturesque sense, it requires intuitive ensemble co-ordination by the actors as physical beings. Again, any notion of individual identity is effaced. The eighth piece, 'Lee's Piece', brings the entire group together through 'mirroring' exercises. The intent is openly affirmative. Rather than merely parodying each other, the actors show how people can transform a range of actions in a spirit of sharing and co-operation. The final sequence, 'The Plague', attempts to consolidate a sense of group solidarity, but this time it is in the Artaudian sense of challenging the audience to act in response to witnessing collective suffering and death. At one point this involves building a pyramid from the bodies of the dead by six of the actors who have died already, a kind of desecration upon desecration. Thus, both on stage, and in the very laps of the audience, a cue is given to break through intellectual apathy into bodily empathy: you could join the dying.

*Mysteries* was not based upon a narrative by a single author. Elements of Artaud and MacLow feed into it, but not as set pieces or works written as plays. It is instead an assemblage or collection of disparate components, perhaps best described as a collated script involving set pieces borrowed from a variety of sources, many of them rehearsal or preparatory exercises provided by alumni members, i.e., Lee Worley, Chaikin and Nicola Cernovich, a former lighting director for the Living Theatre. Many of the pieces were contributed on the basis that they offered something of value to the intended audience, as Henry Howard's earlier quotation indicates.

To reinforce the focus upon shared experience, there is no linking narrative, or tight *mise-en-scène*, provided by a single director, even though Malina and Beck had a certain amount of oversight. There is no set, as such. *Mysteries* dispenses with any sense of individual role or psychological character. There is very little by way of verbal communication, let alone dialogue. Stage movements are framed very much in terms of actor groupings, tableaux, and rituals. The individual actors have no character as such. They dress similarly, working more or less in their street clothes. Performers directly engage with the audience. However, here they not only move out to inhabit the space normally reserved for the audience to appeal to audience members verbally, as one might expect in a play by Pirandello, for example, but they impose themselves physically upon the audience, right in their seats. They also appeal to the audience to intercede and join them on stage in protest during the final scene. This challenge goes far beyond the narrator's charge, almost by way of footnote, in Goodman's *Faustina*, that any self-respecting audience should prevent the carnage. Here the Living Theatre invites the audience to intervene as the action is taking place, blurring the distinction between the actor and audience, and creating new possibilities for the resolution of action. It is worth noting that the final scene as shown in Figure 4.1 was not the one used in the premiere. In the first staging of *Mysteries* the work ended with a sequence called 'Free theatre', which in itself lasted for some three hours, compared to the 30 minutes that became typical for 'The Plague' scene. Essentially, the theatre was turned into a Happening, where actors and audience did what they felt like doing.<sup>19</sup> The results of the experiment on the night of the premiere were quickly deemed unedifying for all concerned because of the disjuncture between actor preparation for the event and the unpreparedness of the audience. A much milder 'free jazz' epilogue was attached to the plague scene version for a few months in 1965, but later dropped (Biner, 1971: 95).

Perhaps because of its obvious references to Eastern mysticism and pacifism *Mysteries* tended to appeal more to younger audiences than it did to seasoned critics. Early performances in Trieste, Vienna and Rome were notable for the degree to which audiences responded to the 'Plague Scene' (Tytell, 1995: 200-1). On a number of other occasions members of the audience either joined the pile of bodies or tried to revive the dead. Sometimes, audience response appears to have been culturally determined. 'The Chord' piece, for example, received a particularly enthusiastic response amongst American audiences:

European audiences found it beautiful and very moving *to watch*; the only participants outside of the company itself were friends brought into the circle by members of the group. The spontaneous participation of the audience began in the United States . . . from that opening night in New Haven until the end of the tour . . . and 'The Chord' took on another meaning for American audiences. It took on a political and moral significance, and for the young people who came up from the audience 'The Chord' became an affirmation, an extraordinary declaration of unity. (Neff, 1970: 51)

<sup>19</sup> One of the key participants at the end of the first staging was Dutch poet Simon Vinkenoog. Vinkenoog was instrumental in launching the Dutch Provos, or provocateurs, in Amsterdam in 1966. The Provos in turn influenced the formation of the San Francisco Diggers in the same year. The Diggers were an outgrowth of the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

Beck and Malina, when interviewed by Richard Schechner during the American tour of late 1968 and early 1969, were far less sanguine about the way in which Europeans responded to the plague scene in *Mysteries*, attributing a higher degree of *angst* in European audiences:

Schechner: At the end of *Mysteries*, you're dying and people go out to comfort you but there's no contact...

Malina: I always give a loving, parting look to anyone who comforts me as I die . . . In Europe, it was more common to be treated aggressively. I have been kicked, stomped, tickled, had my fingers bent back, and my hair set on fire . . . Only in America have we been comforted. Isn't it strange?

Schechner: I find it unthinkable that Europeans are inherently worse than Americans.

Beck: Then why did they carry us out of the theatre as they did in Amsterdam with the intention of dropping us into a canal?

Malina: I think it was mere dishumor. Americans attempt to play it with us . . . But you see in Europe, it is always assumed to be Auschwitz or Hiroshima . . . In Europe they often played it with us.

Schechner: They died?

Beck: Very rarely could we do the *Mysteries* without having at least two or three. That's about the average. Sometimes you get eight or ten, twelve...

Schechner: Here nobody died with you because Americans don't really like to think of death.

Americans don't like to participate in death. Comforting is a sentimental act; dying is a committed act. (qtd. in Schechner, 1969a: 34-35)

Given this sensitivity to European audience reactions vis-à-vis those in America it is perhaps surprising that the Living Theatre did not fine-tune its productions more for American audiences within the first few weeks of performances. It may have been felt that the group had a total package or programme that could not be diluted or compromised, or it may simply have been that before there was time to take stock the touring treadmill began, leaving little time for refinement. Alternatively, the group may not have had the energy or motivation to rework its material, some of which was now several years old.

While audience responses were often positive, critics such as Stefan Brecht, who saw *Mysteries* during the American tour (1968-69) tended to find the work *jejune* and rather fragmentary: '*Mysteries* suffered from lack of organic wholeness . . . these [philosophical] ideas did not sufficiently enrich the individual images & no ordering form for the whole emerged on the level of spectacle or of emotional line' (1969b: 59).

Despite such views, *Mysteries* was performed often throughout the American tour. This decision to perform the work so often in both Europe and America, apart from its simplicity of construction and presentation, probably derived from the positive reactions of audiences.<sup>20</sup> One can easily imagine groups of young people wanting to emulate some of the exercises contained within the overall work. Indeed, since the 1960s, 'The Chord' seems to have migrated into a non-theatrical context (e.g., corporate settings), where team performance is essential.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The performance record indicates that *Mysteries* went on to become the group's most performed work of the 1960s, totalling some 260 presentations.

<sup>21</sup> In my own, admittedly limited, experience of theatre training in the 1980s I encountered this as a warm-up exercise and can attest to its harmonising, or 'tuning in' effect, but I must confess that I had no idea at the time that this exercise belonged originally to Chaikin.

An American critic familiar with the Living Theatre from their years in New York and in some respects a close friend, saw a fusion of life and theatre in their post-exodus work:

Implicitly and explicitly the Living Theatre intends to incite revolution in the theatre and outside. 'Change the world' is a chant in *Mysteries*. The division between art and life is denied, illusion is discarded, the actors are most themselves when they are on stage, least tolerant of sham. The work embodies the shared philosophy of the company members, which is anarchist, revolutionary, non-violent and hip – plus variations. Few of the members have any background in traditional theatre or respect for tradition. Since the theatre and community are indistinguishable, discipline and competence must be reinvented. (Smith, 1969: 33)

Imperfections in the work notwithstanding, *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* was, then, a watershed or transitional production. The group had developed sufficient confidence in itself as a performing and creating entity to take risks with diverse materials that might or might not fit together well. Rather than deconstruct or radically reinterpret an existing text *Mysteries* signalled that the Living Theatre was prepared to fashion parts from various sources in order to create a meaningful whole.

Following the premiere of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* the Living Theatre did not put the new work straight into repertory. It needed further refinement. Instead, a few performances of *The Brig* followed in Berlin, Basel and other places because of existing commitments. However, it was felt that the group needed a more permanent base, where it could give more sustained attention to new work and refine *Mysteries* further. What took place next, a three-month residency at Heist-sur-Mer on the Belgian coast from December 1964 to February 1965, is frequently referred to as a watershed moment in the development of the Living Theatre as a collective.

### Heist-sur-Mer

A liberal Dutch aristocrat named Baron Allard, already known to Beck and Malina, offered the group a short-term solution to its homelessness after the Paris residency. He put at its disposal use of what has variously been described as a farmhouse or orphanage near the town of Heist-sur-Mer.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, aside from the fact that the group was being offered this stay in winter, during the off-season, the location was bleak and remote by any standards. Tytell notes:

The winter of 1965 was terribly cold, and the farmhouse faced the sea, whose damp salty presence touched everything . . . the sleeping area . . . had no source of heat . . . there was no hot water at all, and the available water had to be rationed carefully. [...] The farmhouse was a few kilometers out of Heist, a gray, silent town surrounded by flat fields, and when members of the company would come in for supplies, they were called the gang from 'Bonanza' – an American television western – because the men were bearded and bedraggled, and the women wore long dresses and tinkling jewelry. (1995: 203)

<sup>22</sup> Accounts vary on the actual type of accommodation. Earlier authors, such as Biner (1971), Perkins (1982), and Smith (1969), refer to a Belgian orphanage, but Tytell, writing in 1995, mentions only a farmhouse. One actor, Mel Clay, claimed that the winter was so severe that the 'orphans had to be removed' (Perkins, 1982: 150).

The harshness of living conditions was mitigated mainly by a constant supply of various drugs, and many of those who endured the privations appear to have been transformed by the experience:

For myself and a lot of us, it was an honor to spend that winter at Heist. The whole game structure we brought with us doesn't work. That place was like a raga. It would start off in the morning very quiet, like a drone, and by evening there'd be so much energy you couldn't believe it. Living that primitively really makes you free, and when you come back, you can see it. (Henry Howard qtd. in Smith, 1969: 107)

Another member regarded the living conditions at Heist as 'dreary and horrific' but added that 'we were in our glory creating *The Mysteries*' (Mel Clay qtd. in Perkins, 1982: 150).

Such remarks, connoting an almost religious acceptance of hardship, sacrifice, and isolation resonate strongly with Kanter's 'commitment maintenance' criteria for successful communal experiments. The fact that most of the group managed to stay the full three months at Heist-sur-Mer attests to a strong sense of dedication and self-sacrifice by group members. The few members, such as Rufus Collins, who did not go to Heist, but later rejoined the group, noticed a difference:

They finally came to Rome to play the *Mysteries*, and when I saw them in Rome, I could not imagine what they had gone through in the winter. I had never seen a stranger group of people. It was an entirely different group of people that came out of Heist. The more I hear about it, the gladder I am I wasn't there. (Rufus Collins qtd. in Smith, 1969: 96)

It should also be noted that the leaders of the group were absent for much of this period of confinement (serving their scheduled jail terms for Living Theatre tax evasion convictions back in America), and it seems almost as if this were a deliberate strategy for forging communal identity. Beck and Malina's absence also coincided well with an emergent creative principle of making the director wither away. Beck reflected at the time upon the position of the director and equality of input in his journals and returned to this point on many occasions subsequently:

The problem of the authoritarian position of the director. No function being more important than any other in the free society. . . . The *Mysteries* had no director. We created it in less than four weeks, making changes from time to time during the following months. Some members of the company contributed more than others. What does that mean? (1986: 47)

In practice, what it seemed to mean was that the group could survive without strongly interventionist leadership, even if Malina and Beck were there as shadow leadership figures. Interestingly, although the group suffered hardship at Heist-sur-Mer during the absence of Malina and Beck (who were themselves living in harsh conditions) there is no evidence to suggest that the group turned upon the leaders or upon it itself in a destructive manner, as might happen in Bion's basic assumption group. If there was flight behaviour at all, it seems to have taken two forms. It was either literal, insofar as almost a third of the company did not remain after the Heist experience (this seems to have happened without acrimony). Alternatively, and more importantly, the flight behaviour seems to have been channeled into a stronger conception of the righteousness of what the Living Theatre was doing as a group, coupled with an entrenchment of the belief that those outside the group were benighted in their consciousness. This was

constructive in terms of the internal group paradigm, but created problems in terms of intergroup relationships, i.e., the performers and the audience, as the later works demonstrate.

However conducive to group cohesion the Heist period may have been it did not produce any new collectively created material. Instead, refinements were made to *Mysteries*, much of this being done while Malina and Beck were in jail. Rehearsals also began on Genet's *The Maids*, for which performance dates had already been arranged. The production of *The Maids* that eventuated was relatively well received and duly went into repertory, being performed a total of 88 times between February 1965 and June 1967. While the work gave Beck some personal satisfaction, it did not, from group point of view, greatly contribute to the sense of collaborative experimentation that had begun to gather momentum. Consequently, *The Maids* was phased out, together with *The Brig*, in the months after *Antigone* was debuted.

#### Frankenstein: collective construction

*Frankenstein* was created in a living room in Velletri where we all lived for two months. That's how the community is an integral part of our work and vice versa. (Roy Harris qtd. in Smith, 1969: 133)

When we decided very consciously to function as a community we began to have a new kind of form also at the same time of rehearsals in which someone didn't arrive and say 'this is what we do' and kind of guide discussions, but it became a much more free-flowing functioning thing, and everybody simply felt much more relieved about the work. We found it much more difficult – very much more difficult. When you have twenty-five people discuss: 'How are we going to make a thing called 'Frankenstein' and twenty-five people talk about their personal psyches and their personal dreams and their personal artistic concepts, imaginings, their own notions about acting, their own notions about directing, stage design, lighting, etc., it becomes endlessly boring, one has to go through so much garbage and so much vomit. But that is what we call part of the struggle. (Beck qtd. in Bissinger, 1967: 6)

Within two months of the Heist-sur-Mer experience discussions began about staging Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, an idea that Beck and Malina had harboured for a number of years. Initial brainstorming and research took place in Velletri, Italy, during April 1965. According to one source 'the group met every day for three weeks for about ten hours a day to evolve the piece' (Perkins, 1982: 169-70). Two months later, while performing *Mysteries* and *The Maids* in Berlin and Munich, and after exhausting what free accommodation was available amongst friends and theatre owners, the group was temporarily housed by the Berlin Senate in Spandau, the crumbling prison complex that, at the insistence of the U.S.S.R., held one prisoner, convicted German war criminal, Rudolf Hess.

By now the composition of the group had changed. The fatigue of touring, and a daily allowance of little more than one dollar had been too much for at least one third of the 25 Americans who had wintered at



Heist (Tytell, 1995: 209). After Heist, the missing numbers were made up by Europeans. The new ensemble began work on *Frankenstein* in Spandau over a period of several weeks.

In a letter to the director of the Venice Biennale, where the Living Theatre was engaged to appear in September 1965, Beck outlined the intended approach to the Living Theatre's adaptation of *Frankenstein*. He pointed out, more than once, and using Artaud as justification, that although loosely based on Mary Shelley's concept, there would be no text as such. Instead, the group would build a spectacle using predominantly visual, musical, and mechanical effects, in a manner similar to that used in *Mysteries*. As Beck saw it the relevant theme was 'the attempt to create life in order to create servants for man, the attempt to eliminate the strugglesome aspect of work in this world, and the tragic effects of this kind of thinking' (Beck qtd. in Tytell, 1995: 208). (A poetic outline of the main actions, adapted from Aldo Rostagno's representation of the plot in his book on the Living Theatre, is shown in Figure 4.2 on page 110)

There are three acts, the first beginning with an attempt by some of the actors, seated in meditation postures in a circle, to levitate one of the female members of the company who is positioned at the center of the circle. A countdown follows, and it is apparent, following this, that the levitation has not succeeded. The meditators turn against the woman they have attempted to levitate and symbolically kill her and place her in a coffin, carrying her through the auditorium, with a thoughtful Dr. Frankenstein at the rear. An actor protests the action taking place and is pursued by two members of the procession. After capture the actor is taken to be tortured in one of fifteen cubicles, constructed on stage as three-level-by-five-cell-wide vertical scaffolding and platforms. The remaining members of the procession choose between being persecutors and protesters, and eventually, with the incarcerations complete, there remain only two surviving persecutors along with Dr. Frankenstein on stage, the latter removing the heart from the victim in the coffin. An 'Automation collage' follows, replete with capitalist and Marxist slogans, encapsulating the rise of industrialisation, and the consequent human enslavement to the machine age. Frankenstein asks repeatedly 'How can we end human suffering?' and eventually, after official government approbation and advice from a number of historical figures he assembles a creature from various body parts. The coming to life of the creature is acted out within a three-level grid. The actors join their bodies, one actor an entire arm, another a leg, one curled up as the head, and so forth, to form a 'super-organism' which appears to dangle in space, staring out at the world with two flashlights for eyes. This image closes the first act.

The second act revolves around events inside the creature's head, the structure on stage now lit in the outline of a human head in profile. Each cubicle contains an actor who acts out various parts of the brain. Once liberated from a mummy-like binding, an actor representing the Ego passes through all of the cubicles, encountering each function of the brain, variously threatening and calming, evoking a state of

inner conflict. Following Frankenstein's inability to communicate with the creature, it falls into a dream about a sea voyage, the faculties of the mind now becoming the crew on a ship.

Figure 4.2 The plot of the Living Theatre's *Frankenstein*

<b>FRANKENSTEIN</b>	
<p>Premiered Sept. 26 1965 in Venice, Italy.</p> <p>The ethical and moral problems involved in creating an artificial man become the central political-social-psychic question facing contemporary society: 'How can we end human suffering?' The set itself, a huge three-tiered scaffolding with fifteen unit-cell open playing areas, is as much actor as the cast, who create in it hundreds of entities of the ancient and modern world.</p> <p><u>The Action - Act I</u></p> <p>a meditation - the purpose of which is to lead to levitation.</p> <p>if it succeeds the play is consummated. if it fails it becomes a victimization. the net is thrown. The coffin is brought. someone says no. a procession begins. others say no they are hunted, they are electrocuted, they are gassed, they are guillotined, they are racked, they are hanged, they are garrotted, they are beheaded, they are crucified, they are shot. two plead for their lives. two survive. a storm rises. Dr. Frankenstein takes the heart of the victim. the dead shall be raised. burial by church and state. they lower the hanged man: the body is painted the workers scream the old and the poor come with snow and hammer. how can we end human suffering. the capitalist speaks. The marxists march. the oracle prophesies. the body reversed. the generals, the capitalists, the marxists, the workers, and the explanatory voice speak of automation. the laboratory is constructed. the cabbalists build the golem. the doctor implants the victim's heart in the body on the laboratory table. foot, brain, and eye are grafted. the failure of the heart. Paracelsus appears and directs the graft of the third eye. Freud appears and orders the sexual graft. Norbert Wiener appears and advises the use of electrodes. the electrodes are attached. the creature moves.</p> <p><u>The Action - Act II</u></p> <p>inside the Creature's head. he opens his eye. he sees light. he functions.</p>	<p>he experiences miracles and wonders as his capacities rouse. he sleeps. he dreams of the sea. Shipwreck. Drowning. the brine bubbles up. he wakes. the control booth instructs him. Educational input. he learns of the world. he translates into the mythological theatre of prototype. daedalus discovers how to fly. Icarus is launched. Europa is raped, Pasiphae seduces the bull. the Minotaur is born. the maze is made. the young men are sacrificed. Theseus kills the Minotaur. Icarus falls. he is instructed in the qualities. the control booth illustrates. he translates into the legend of enlightenment. Instruction persists, the four horsemen of the apocalypse are riding. the functions of the head slash the ego out into the world. the body vanishes, the word is born. the Creature narrates his story. the earth people flee the Creature encounters death. the four horsemen of the apocalypse are riding. the functions slash each other out into the world. the police. the siren. the killing. he takes over authority. Authorities take over.</p> <p><u>The Action - Act III</u></p> <p>the posse is searching. they say yes. the prisoners are fingerprinted, dressed, and photographed. world action. arrests. world action. the whistle blows. world action they move from cell to cell. world action. the doctor is arrested. a note is passed. world action. the prisoners eat. world action. a knife is passed. world action. the prisoners sleep. the jailbreak the fire. Alarm. death by fire. the Creature counts. man lives.</p> <p>(Source: Rostagno 1970: 112-13.)</p>

The vessel strikes an iceberg, and the crew members are left to save themselves. An actor then reads out random pieces of news of the day from the major daily newspapers. This is juxtaposed with the creature's journey into primitive myths, beginning with those of ancient Crete, again acted out by the functions of the mind. Following this, Frankenstein proceeds to inject the creature with the Legend of the Buddha in order to complete its spiritual education. Then the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse appear, prefiguring the moment when the creature kills for the first time. The creature disappears, and the larger head of the creature in panic expels the Ego, which now takes on the role of the creature. After painful efforts to speak the Ego launches into a long monologue taken straight from Mary Shelley's novel. The monologue describes the creature's emergence into the world, its subsequent disillusionment there, and its desire for revenge. The creature disappears with actors in pursuit. When cornered, it kills its pursuer and then the performers once again become victimisers and victims, the act closing with pursuers advancing menacingly towards the audience.

The third act begins with another episode of victimisation, this time in pantomime. Fugitives are caught and imprisoned in the cubicles and subjected to various tortures, lights flashing on and off to freeze the actors in tableaux poses similar to those used in *Mysteries*. The structure becomes a World Prison and echoes the cell-like set of *The Brig*. Even Frankenstein is imprisoned, and he starts a fire in his cell. After the ensuing pandemonium of the prison fire, and the deaths of the prisoners, the performers slowly reconstruct the creature with their bodies, although this time the creature holds a net and lamp. After a countdown mirroring that in Act One, the lamp is lit and shone on the audience. However, the creature then drops the net and raises both arms in a gesture of peace and reconciliation, suggesting that there is hope for the future of humanity.

### Embodying the group in *Frankenstein*

While it is based loosely on the novel by Mary Shelley *Frankenstein* is generally regarded as the first collaborative, if not fully collective, creation of the Living Theatre. The Living Theatre relied more heavily upon stage design and a relatively sophisticated set in this work, but it retained the principle of de-characterisation in the general *mise-en-scène*, making the bodies of the actors in groupings the main focus of action. As with earlier works, particularly *Mysteries*, there is the same them and us configuration of victims and victimisers, one group versus another. More strikingly, the actors' bodies are used in specific sculptural or connected forms in *Frankenstein*, rather than merely being aggregated in a pile, row, or circle as had been done in previous productions. The most vivid sculptural image is that created by using the actors as parts of the creature's body. It appears in Act One, and it is the construction that ends the play. Even still photographs manage to convey some of the power of this form of animation by a group. The

connected form is that of the interior of the creature's head, the simultaneous action within the three-storey grid creating a powerful ensemble effect. This is used repeatedly throughout the work.

Unlike *Mysteries*, which was in effect a collage of pieces contributed by different members, work on *Frankenstein* began discursively, requiring study, debate and a pooling of experiences around the theme of doing evil. Beck then synthesised the group's ideas in isolation to produce a script of sorts. The group revised the work at least four times and Beck provided the written revisions. Beck also co-directed the work with Malina, later reflecting that, although it was short of being a collective creation, it had advanced, albeit fitfully, toward the goal of total collaboration when compared with the process used for *Mysteries*:

*Frankenstein* fluctuated more. Judith and Julian always charging first. When we flagged, others pushed harder. Total collaboration: direction scenario acting lighting setting costumes all elements [...] *Frankenstein* refused to cohere in the time allotted without the rigid schedules of the director [...] In Reggio Emilia, working on *Frankenstein*, we cut all discussions. We needed to control a project whose needs we could not measure. It commanded its own destiny. The directors, J & J, however, were building the spectacle for the talents of the company of performers everyone of whom they knew intimately. The performers directed themselves thru the medium of the director. (Beck, 1986: 48-49)

Although one could argue that this was sophistry or wishful thinking on the part of a director aware of the rising tide of ultrademocracy in society at this time, at least one of the actors saw the process in similar terms:

The work we are doing in *Frankenstein* is where the Living Theatre is at. It isn't one person's idea or two people's, it's thirty-one people's idea, and we're trying to bring the same discipline to the work that one person could bring. At times we're very far from paradise, as far away as we are from our own lives, and as close. (Luke Theodore qtd. in Smith, 1969: 116)

His comment gives some indication of the magnitude of collectivity sought by the Living Theatre. It is not enough for two, or even ten members to contribute. All should want to contribute in some way. One can also note here how the division of labour in the Living Theatre changed over time while the overall size of the company did not. Earlier tours to Europe had involved almost as many people in total, but roles had been more clearly differentiated between those who were on stage and those who were not – some were actors, some were crew. From *Mysteries* onwards the entire company was to be involved in the creation of a work and almost everyone was to be engaged in performance in some form.

Interestingly, *Frankenstein* broke with the tradition of audience participation that had developed in the Living Theatre. It also relied heavily upon a built set, at least by Living Theatre standards, so much so, that the set needed its own truck on tour. Such concessions to theatrical convention did not, however, extend to the presentation of individual characters as individuated beings on stage. Truer to Artaud than, say a costume drama, the characters, such as they are, perform their actions in a highly symbolic and stylised way. If they are at all recognisable as particular historical figures, such as Dr. Frankenstein or Sigmund Freud, it is only to work in with the expressionist mood of the piece.

The premiere of *Frankenstein*, perhaps unsurprisingly given the ambitious set design, was fraught with technical problems. Added to this, the season was abruptly cancelled after the first performance due to a dispute with the director of the Biennale, which led to the group being escorted to the Italian border with Austria. Later reviews of the play tended to pronounce it a partial success. It had little to offer the audience in terms of direct participation, but more to offer those with a concern for stage design and visual impact. In some it produced mixed reactions. Pondering the question as to whether or not the Living Theatre could offer anything significant to the 'new theatre', critic Michael Smith worried:

When I saw *Frankenstein*, that first night, I thought in terror that I'd found my answer, a flat no. I'd have to look elsewhere or give up the search... During the next few days I spent with various old and new friends in the Living Theatre company and was reminded of something I already knew: the Living Theatre is more than just a theatre, it is a community, a way of life, almost a religion... The Living Theatre is experimental on many levels... It is a theatre in a sense which hardly exists in America: a large permanent company with a repertory of four, soon to be five. The company consists of about twenty-eight adults and five children... Judith Malina and Julian Beck are the geniuses of the company, it is unmistakably their theatre, but its operation seems more cooperative now than it ever did in New York. Its communal life is extra intense because the company and the work are the only points of relative stability and permanence: traveling, the theatre must be self-sufficient. The theatre must occupy the center of its members' lives. (1969: 14-15)

Whatever the artistic and communal virtues of such an ambitious undertaking, there were obvious flaws:

As I began to see *Frankenstein*, I also saw that it is not yet fully realized. It is sometimes simply too hard to follow, needlessly inaccessible. It is sometimes tediously repetitious, or too slow, and a few parts are much too long. A few of the technical tricks misfire and throw off the tone and rhythm... Also, the Living Theatre now lacks good actors even more than it did in New York. (17-18)

Ultimately, *Frankenstein* evolved to gain respect from commentators. As Croyden puts it:

It is easy to understand why many critics felt that the Living Theatre's production of *Frankenstein* was the most theatrically satisfying piece in the repertory. Not only did it appeal to those most concerned with structure, but it most clearly exemplified the Living Theatre's philosophical belief at the time. (1974: 101)

Croyden goes on to say that the marriage between a philosophy of humans as innocent creatures deformed by modern society (here a pacifist anarchism filtered through Mary Shelley's own synthesis of Godwin and Rousseau) and the Living's own philosophy of mind (a crude kind of Freudianism) is much less successful. Yet this did not seriously undermine some of the more powerful moments:

The theatricality of the fire, the creation of the Creature, the configuration of Man/Creature, were authentically exciting. Especially effective was the massive three-tier compartmental setting, which recalled both Kaprow and Lebel's work as well as that of Meyerhold's constructivist days. [...] The high point of the production was the actors' hanging from the scaffolding to resurrect the Creature, a personal symbol perhaps of the actors' own will to survive despite the real world prison to which they feel subjected. (103-4)

In any case, the Living Theatre was proud of this work and committed itself to touring *Frankenstein*, with its cumbersome set, throughout Europe for some three years, regarding it as a powerful philosophical statement about the violation of the sanctity of the individual in modern industrial society.

### *Antigone: embodying collective insanity*

Interest in staging *Antigone* dated back to 1961, when the Living Theatre toured Europe for the first time. According to Biner, Malina and Beck purchased a copy of Brecht's *Modellbuch* for *Antigone* on a side trip to Athens (1971: 145). They were struck by its relevance to the theme of civil disobedience. Brecht's version was based on Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles' tragedy. Hölderlin had remained relatively faithful to Sophocles, his main modification being the introduction of greater ambiguity in Antigone's relationship to the gods. Brecht was less interested in this aspect than the poetic qualities of Hölderlin's translation, which he used to produce a more human-focussed political narrative. Brecht's main protagonist is neither heroic nor revolutionary. Antigone acts justly, but she should have acted earlier. In the Living Theatre interpretation, for which Malina was almost entirely responsible, there is greater valorisation of the principle of taking a clear pacifist stance, of 'drawing the line', as Paul Goodman had put it (Tytell, 1995: 221). In this *Antigone* the main character acts as the lone voice of humanitarian reason surrounded by collective insanity. (A synopsis of the plot together with the Living Theatre's stage interpretation is shown in Figure 4.3 on page 115)

Many actor movements and groupings in *Antigone*, both on stage and during the brief excursions into the auditorium, echo the approaches taken in *Mysteries* and *Frankenstein*. Most of the actors lack any distinct identities, and although there are a few individual characters, such as Antigone, Creon and Tiresias, they do not exist solely as autonomous physical entities on stage. They are almost always supported by the ensemble, in the case of Creon, literally so, as he cannot function without being borne upon the shoulders of others. Malina's Antigone, as acted by her, is characterised by a deliberate ordinariness rather than a larger-than-life uniqueness. The use here of actors *en masse*, and the de-privileging of the autonomous individual can be seen as consonant with an overarching philosophy of the primacy of the collective rather than a staging habit into which the living Theatre had fallen unconsciously. It was also consistent with Brecht's primary requirement for actors to appear on stage in clusters rather than standing apart.

According to both Beck and Malina, the Living Theatre version of *Antigone* rested upon a combination of ancient and modern, overlain by a synthesis of Brecht and Artaud, the former known for his concentration on the intellectual consciousness of the individual, the latter for his appeal to the unconscious, visceral mode of perception:

Figure 4.3 The action in the Living Theatre's adaptation of *Antigone*

ANTIGONE	
<p>The dominant theme of this tragedy is the superior <i>raison d'être</i> of civil disobedience. Antigone's brothers Eteokles and Polyneikes were both killed in Creon's war against Argos. But Polyneikes, refusing to fight, was killed fleeing the battlefield and therefore burial is denied him. Antigone disobeys Creon's order and buries her brother, for she believes that no state can proclaim laws holier than human laws, the laws of love and pity. None of the Thebans listen to her pleas to take action against their despotic ruler and try to end the war. Creon confronts Antigone in an attempt to convince her that it is useless to oppose him; he fails to dissuade her and she is condemned to death. Hemon, Creon's son, betrothed to Antigone, tries in vain to change his father's will; it is too late, Antigone is put to death and Creon has ordered a victory celebration to distract the people of Thebes from the catastrophic course the war has taken. The blind seer Tiresias comes to warn Creon and his people of their destruction, but he too is ignored; the dance of Bacchus continues. Only upon realizing the imminent calamity do the Elders turn against Creon. Meanwhile Hemon has voluntarily followed Antigone in death, and Megareus, Creon's other son, is slain on the Argive battlefield. When finally everybody realizes the horror of the war, the injustice of tyranny and the meaning of Antigone's sacrifice, it is too late to prevent the destruction of Thebes.</p>	<p>3. Suddenly, the tension, which seems unbearable throughout the theatre, is broken by the actors' wails, screams, laments, and by the piercing sounds of sirens. The actors drop to their knees; some run out into the audience, threatening to kill us, first with their hands and then with imaginary knives, swords, guns, and scythes.</p> <p>4. On stage, a ritual murder begins: Creon emasculates the Elders; one by one he castrates them, unmistakably, repeatedly, as they fall to their knees, screaming with pain. The action is graphic. Meanwhile, the Chorus moans, screams, wails, hums, and groans, a non-verbal symphony that testifies to the agony of the Greeks.</p> <p>5. Some of the Elders and Chorus translate their thoughts into instantaneous action by creating physical configurations that resemble images from Bosch's <i>Descent Into Hell</i>, Goya's <i>Ravages of War</i>, Michelangelo's <i>Last Judgment</i>. Without using words, the actors turn the stage into <i>Pyramids of Hell</i>. These are counterpoised by moving scenes in which Man comments on what he is, what he has become, and what he could have been.</p>
<p>(Adapted from Rostagno, 1970: 138-39)</p>	<p>6. Action is suspended for a few instants and the actors, with upraised hands, proceed down the aisles of the theatre to form an architectural, cathedral-like pattern while intoning lines based on the Sophocles/Brecht wailing-wall dirge, <i>Hymn to Man</i>. The poem evokes the Babylonian captivity as well as an instant recognition of the human condition – that, in spite of all man's knowledge he has become his own enemy. For that instant, victim and victors realize their oneness, and weep.</p>
<p>An interesting aspect of <i>Antigone</i> is the Living Theatre's attitude to the audience, whom they viewed first as victims, and then as persecutors.</p> <p>1. As we come into the theatre, Creon stands with his henchmen; they peer out at us, nod in our direction and whisper, presumably about us. Intermittently other actors saunter out on stage. One of them regards us with suspicion, another with hostility, defiance, and arrogance. A girl in an Egyptian haircomb appears, wearing a purple satin blouse and black satin pants; a big, thick, round-buckled belt holds in her pelvis; she looks like a Spanish apache dancer, ready to whip us. Another slinks onto the stage; she is a double for Dracula's wife: she is all in black – black sphinx-like hair, black, black eyebrows slanting upward toward the sky, layer upon layer of different colors on her eyelids. Sleek, shiny, sexy, and menacing, she glares at us.</p>	<p>7. But only for an instant. Soon Antigone is put to death, and the Greeks celebrate with an orgy. This is a brilliantly conceived ritual, executed in time to the clicking of an actor's tongue and the slap of his hand on his thigh. The actors move in a pattern; they attempt to arouse each other by touching their own genitals; they smile, breath heavily, and groan orgasmically, but their fantasies are more promising than reality. Despite the fondling of their bodies, they provoke neither desire nor sensuality; instead, they invoke a death celebration, in which the participants' egotism is the focal point. In sharp contrast with the orgy, Antigone and her lover repeatedly execute powerful and stunning physical images (reminiscent of Picasso's <i>Guernica</i>) that dramatize the last moments of their agony and death.</p>
<p>2. And so they come on stage, each one more sinister than the last; each in his or her hippie outfit: colorful tops, jeans, beads, and hair – long, gleaming, short curly, thick, frizzled, rubberbanded, or scruffy hair. Their bodies, supple, sculptured, and thin, they form abstract patterns as they arrange themselves kinetically across the stage. They stand for many minutes, confronting us with their bodies, so different from our well-dressed, well-mannered, audience-behavior: we are their enemies; they are ours. We are being scrutinized, analyzed, categorized: our fate is being decided.</p>	<p>8. After the killings are over, the company take positions across the length of the stage, poised as if to attack the audience. As the group approaches the apron, they glare at us, and suddenly realize that the audience is also an enemy. Slowly they move backward and continue backing up against the wall, some cringing and crouching. Others stand horrified, as though they are about to be machine-gunned. One by one, the actors disappear. The stage becomes empty.</p>
<p>(Adapted from Rostagno, 1970: 138-39)</p>	<p>(Adapted from Croyden, 1974: 110-12)</p>

We did *Antigone* to see if it was possible to do a play 2,500 years old with a strong, modern political interpretation, to see if we could relate the poetry and wisdom of the Greeks, of Marx, of Brecht, of the madness force that is Artaud. We feel that it is possible to revolutionize ourselves without burning down the past. (Beck qtd. in Phelps, 1967: 130)

Using the actors in unison or in groupings of various kinds seems logical if the goal is principally that of representing collective insanity in a way that moves the audience on a physical level rather than appealing to intellectual deliberation.

When Beck and Malina were interviewed about the process of creating *Antigone* Malina observed: 'We learned all the lines and then got into a free space and then did whatever we wanted without any discussion. We went through it three times. We totally improvised the play' (qtd. in Schechner, 1969a: 39).

Beck added: 'We talked about the play a long time, like any other theatre company. We wanted to find a way to speak the language so that the sense and the music was perceptible and we really knew nothing of how to do these things. We also wanted to make it a collective experience' (qtd. in Schechner, 1969a: 39).

Despite Beck's remark about doing what any other theatre company does in terms of talking about the work, one can see here a stronger sense of collective faith in the actors as the total source for the work. In conventional theatre companies the talk or discussion often runs along hierarchical lines; one is more or less told what to do and key ideas in a play are explained to performers by directors and playwrights. In less conventional theatre groups, feedback will be sought from external sources, perhaps by way of open rehearsals, workshops, or discussions with relevant interest groups, as was the case with the Performance Group and the San Francisco Mime Troupe at various times. The Living Theatre chose to work more hermetically, arguably to its own disadvantage.

Whereas *Frankenstein* had relied upon props and an elaborate stage set *Antigone* partially reversed the approach, bringing it more into line with the general pattern of development of Living Theatre *mise-en-scène* in the 1960s. The actors dressed casually and similarly, although slightly more eccentrically, perhaps, than most audience members. The familiar devices of advance on the audience, implicating the audience in the action, and confronting the fourth wall, are present, but in attenuated form: the physical contact with the audience is much reduced. The audience is looked at, scrutinised and implicated, but not touched. There is no invitation to join the action or alter it. A new twist is the collective retreat of the cast from the spectators as the play ends, placing the collective guilt for the tragedy squarely in the laps of the audience.

For any critic or theatre-goer drawn to conventional narrative *Antigone* held promise as a recognised classical dramatic text, albeit one heavily reworked. It was also relatively contained in terms of stage action, the actors looking through the fourth wall, but never fully penetrating it. This allowed the action to proceed without great interruption. However, any tacit restoration of order, or literary wholeness, seems to



have been overshadowed by reactions to the quality of acting in the work. Croyden subsequently complained:

*Antigone* might have been the Living Theatre's masterpiece. Certainly, it had the makings of a masterpiece. But a sloppy approach to aesthetics, typical of the Becks, remained a central problem. If the Becks had been more adept at synthesizing styles, or if they had rectified either badly trained or untrained voices in the company, the production might have been splendid. But the Living Theatre actors lacked plain audibility; they shouted raucously, garbled their words incoherently, or were otherwise difficult or impossible to understand; half the play was incomprehensible. (1974: 112)

In terms of physical discipline the group seemed very capable. The major problem noted by Croyden, especially in the experimental fusion of Brecht and Artaud attempted in *Antigone*, seems to have been the inability of the Living Theatre to find a satisfactory means of oral communication outside of ordinary language and dialogue:

Essentially a non-verbal theatre, the company wanted to give a new sensibility and dimension to language by investing words with sound. But they repeatedly used meaningless incantation or word elongation without any discernible emotional base, so that much of the sound became noise; this contrivance reduced the language to political rhetoric, and thus the dialectic of the play was obscured. (113)

Croyden later concedes that, despite its flaws, the work was nevertheless an achievement in terms of its attempt to revitalise a classic piece. Stefan Brecht, son of Bertolt Brecht, guardian of the latter's *oeuvre*, and friend of the Living Theatre, was less equivocal. He regarded *Antigone* as the worst of the four productions he saw during the American tour:

Their Artaudian *mise-en-scène* does not apply well to a *play*, their acting shows up badly (though their potential for a distinctive style is most obvious in this work). The play is derived from a *myth* but the Living Theatre did not quite see its way clear to do it that way. (Brecht, 1969b: 58)

Whatever critics thought of it, it was more or less legible as theatre, and indeed, a number of authors regarded Malina's efforts with *Antigone* both on and off stage, as laudable (Tytell, 1995: 396n).

Audience responses are harder to gauge. As noted above, participatory access points for the audience were more or less removed. It was less spectacular than *Frankenstein*. As a commentary on American involvement in Vietnam *Antigone* was no doubt provocative for some who saw it. That it was palatable to audiences is evidenced by the fact that it was performed 110 times in Europe over an 18-month period between February 1967 and August 1968. By comparison, *The Brig*, for example, was performed some 106 times over a longer period between September 1964 and June 1967. Further measure of *Antigone*'s success can be inferred from its overall frequency of performance in repertory: more than 170 performances over a period of three years, from February 1967 to January 1970. On at least one occasion during the American tour of the repertory in 1968 and 1969, in San Francisco, *Antigone* was specifically requested in preference to *Paradise Now* by the so-called 'hip community', as if to say that even the spaced out wanted to see something grounded in narrative as much as something cosmic.

Deliberate ensemble stage presentation notwithstanding, *Antigone* was to some extent a straightforward attempt to engage in the debate over the relevance of ancient drama to modern theatre. Within a year of the debut of *Antigone* the urge to create from the ground up seems to have become much stronger. A work created entirely by the membership of the Living Theatre collective was a primary goal.

*Paradise Now*: apogee of the collective creation process

Initial discussions about what came to be called *Paradise Now* took place in Rome in late January through to early February 1968. By mid-February a place where a new work could be rehearsed more or less undisturbed had been found. In Europe it was winter, but in sharp contrast to the accommodation typically experienced by the group over the preceding three and a half years Beck secured the use of Villagio Magico, a Club Méditerranée resort in Cefalù, Sicily, for three months (Tytell, 1995: 225). The climate there was apparently so benevolent that many of the actors shed their clothes for the entire duration, possibly accounting for the defiant nakedness that characterises *Paradise Now*. While shortage of money was still an issue, living conditions were relatively relaxed. Furthermore, the group had not had an extended break from travelling in over three years. Three months in a beach resort must have been a welcome respite.

In-depth daily discussions as a whole group on the idea of paradise began the process at Villagio Magico. Group-based discourse was nothing new for the Living Theatre, nor indeed, as Beck had commented at other times, was it any different from normal theatre practice. However, for *Paradise Now* it was understood that the discussions themselves would form the basis of the text, and that these discussions would be ongoing. Notebooks were kept by Malina, Beck, and other members of the company, amounting, eventually, to some 700 pages of transcribed text. The notebooks kept for *Mysteries*, *Frankenstein* and *Antigone*, although they document inputs from cast members, are not as lengthy as *Paradise Now*, the linear feet volume for the latter rivalling the total volume of the other three (see Living Theatre [a]; Living Theatre [b]). The importance attached to the *Paradise Now* process is evidenced by the fact that notebook excerpts were published in a special Living Theatre issue of *The Drama Review* in spring 1969. Beck explains in the introduction to these excerpts:

During the course of the rehearsals for *Paradise Now*, Judith and I and many other members of the company kept notebooks recording more or less what was said and tracing the development of the ideas and for the play. The notebooks then served as a gathering place for these ideas, a storeroom which we visited repeatedly and from which we drew supplies in constructing the play . . . Discussions such as these have become an integral part of our working method, and were the source material out of which *Mysteries*, *Frankenstein*, *Paradise Now*, and the *mise-en-scène* for *Antigone* were created. (qtd. in Living Theatre, 1969: 90)

Meditation, yoga and exercises accompanied the discussions about various texts and teachings. Works such as the I Ching, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the Cabala, and the ideas of Rousseau, Wilhelm Reich and

R.D. Laing were incorporated. Actors brought ideas and action to workshop sessions and the group would attempt to embody the ideas physically. According to Neff (1970) the 'Mat Piece' for 'The Rite of Opposite Forces' and the 'Totem Poles' part of 'The Vision of the Death and Resurrection of the American Indian' were created at Cefalù.

After several weeks of this kind of discussion and a number of experiments in representing the ideas physically, Beck and Malina locked themselves away for several days and attempted to map or chart a structure for the work. (The resulting structure is shown in Figure 4.4 on page 120)

I have rendered it here in simplified form, adapting it from the original programme/chart handed out to audiences, similar to that which is contained in the book of *Paradise Now* published in 1971. The original chart for the 'voyage' is not numbered (I have done this to make the sequence of action more easily read). I have also shaded the sections relating to 'The Revolution of...' since they are merely statements and do not denote stage action. Also, the original includes a myriad of 'keywords' and symbols, relating to Hindu texts (the chakras), the I Ching, the Hasidic Rungs, and the Hebrew *Cabala*. It also shows simple outline drawings of two male figures, the left representing Adam Kadmon from the *Cabala*, the right a Tantric figure embodying Kundalini energy. There is in this chart a breathtaking hybridisation of Oriental references, one that present commentators such as Bharucha (1993) and Stephens (1998) would find highly problematic, but this kind of eclecticism, whether or not it involved appropriations of non-Western culture had become something of a countercultural given in 1968.

The structure of *Paradise Now* is to be read as if beginning at the bottom of a ladder of awareness. It starts at the left-hand end of Rung I with the relevant Rite, followed by the Vision, and then by the Action. The work then moves up a rung, the same rite-vision-action sequence being followed, until the top rung is reached. In effect, this means that the work has eight 'movements', if not Acts, and three scenes within each movement, giving a total of 24 parts in all.

In principle, the rites and the visions are to be carried out by the actors, but where audience members wish to participate they are encouraged to do so. The Action part of each rung, however, is the point at which the spectators are literally meant to take centre-stage. The actors retreat to play supporting or facilitating roles, often posing questions about what can be done in the immediate social and political setting of the performance. To this extent, and in some of the other rites and visions, this is where the production is indexed to the most salient political, revolutionary, or otherwise pressing events taking place in the time and place of performance.

Figure 4.4 The structure of *Paradise Now*

<b>THE LIVING THEATRE</b>	<b>PARADISE NOW</b>		<b>COLLECTIVE CREATION</b>
	RITE	VISION	ACTION
THE REVOLUTION OF	PERMANENT REVOLUTION: CHANGE!		
RUNG VIII: GOD AND MAN	8a: THE RITE OF I AND THOU	8b: THE VISION OF UNDOING THE MYTH OF EDEN	8c: THE STREET:
THE REVOLUTION OF	BEING GLIMPSES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WORLD		
RUNG VII: HEAVEN AND EARTH	7a: THE RITE OF NEW POSSIBILITIES	7b: THE VISION OF LANDING ON MARS	7c: HANOI/SAIGON: THERE IS A GROUP LIVING IN AN ANARCHIST SOCIETY. WHAT ARE THEY DOING?
THE REVOLUTION OF	TRANSFORMATION THE STRUGGLE PERIOD		
RUNG VI: LOVE	6a: THE RITE OF OPPOSITE FORCES	6b: THE VISION OF THE MAGIC LOVE ZAP	6c: CAPETOWN/BIRMINGHAM: THE BLACKS ARE CONFRONTING THE WHITES WITH REVOLUTION. HOW DO THEY OVERCOME?
THE REVOLUTION OF	ACTION THE PLAN GOES INTO EFFECT: BURN THE MONEY!		
RUNG V: REDEMPTION	5a: THE RITE OF THE MYSTERIOUS VOYAGE	5b: THE VISION OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE RACES	5c: PARIS: THE FUTURE: THE NON-VIOLENT ANARCHIST REVOLUTION
THE REVOLUTION OF	THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION: THE EXORCISM OF VIOLENCE APOKATASTASIS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF DEMONIC FORCES INTO THE CELESTIAL		
RUNG IV: THE WAY	4a: THE RITE OF UNIVERSAL INTERCOURSE	4b: THE VISION OF APOKATASTASIS	4c: JERUSALEM: THE VICTIMS BECOME THE EXECUTIONERS. WHAT DO THE PACIFISTS DO?
THE REVOLUTION OF	GATHERED FORCES		
RUNG III: TEACHING	3a: THE RITE OF STUDY	3b: THE VISION OF THE CREATION OF LIFE	3c: HERE AND NOW: THERE IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE THAT WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD
THE REVOLUTION OF	REVELATION THE DESTINATION MUST BE MADE CLEAR		
RUNG II: PRAYER	2a: THE RITE OF PRAYER	2b: THE VISION OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE NORTH POLE	2c: BOLIVIA: A GROUP OF REVOLUTIONARIES PLOT THEIR STRATEGY
THE REVOLUTION OF	CULTURES THE CULTURE MUST BE CHANGED. PERCEPTION MUST BE CHANGED. SO THAT THE USEFULNESS OF THE REVOLUTION CAN BE COMPREHENDED		
RUNG I: GOOD AND EVIL	1a: THE RITE OF GUERILLA THEATRE	1b: THE VISION OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN	1c: NEW YORK CITY: 8,000,000 PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY

The chart for the intended voyage to Paradise, produced by Malina and Beck in March 1968, was subsequently used to more fully block out the work. Some of this blocking work took place in April during the remaining weeks in Cefalù. Beck had also arranged for the premiere of the group's new work at the 1968 Theatre Festival of Avignon in July. With this in mind, accommodation, nominal fees and a specially constructed outdoor stage were part of the bargain. The group was thus assured a three-month period of dedicated rehearsal time, from mid-May to mid-July, at Avignon.

In the interim, after performing *Mysteries* and *Antigone* in Palermo, Tours and Bourges, the group went to Paris, principally, according to Tytell, 'to try to arrange a television contract to film a series of street plays, what they called "guerrilla theatre"' (1995: 231), although the group had also been concerned about hepatitis amongst its members and Paris offered better prospects for medical treatment. It is important to note that the group had little by way of collective medical or health insurance. Being in the Living Theatre brought none of the minor fringe benefits associated with most professional theatre companies. Kanter (1972) has noted the importance of 'sacrifice commitment' in successful communal experiments and in this respect the Living Theatre seems to have conformed to her prescription.

On the way to Paris the group became vividly aware, through television reports, of the acts of civil disobedience and rioting taking place there in early May. Students had already been protesting at universities in France, Italy, Spain and Germany, principally about American involvement in Vietnam and the conspicuous quietism of several supposedly socialist governments in Europe. Actions at Nanterre, an extension of the Sorbonne, had been taking place since fall of 1967, partly over the repressive, outdated academic system and the overcrowded primitive facilities. Matters had escalated since March 1968, mainly because of the aggressive suppression of these protests by the notorious police paramilitary special forces, the Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS), to become a national state of emergency. Police violence prompted several unions to take the opportunity to challenge the French Government, both to improve their own working conditions, and in support of the students. During May and June there were riots in the Latin Quarter of Paris, the Sorbonne was taken over by students and staff, factories in various parts of the country were occupied, including the Renault plant outside of the capital, and there was a series of General Strikes. To many France seemed on the brink of a communist-led revolution during these months.

Thus, unintentionally, but to some extent serendipitously, the group arrived in Paris a caught up in great turmoil, and only a day before the first of the general strikes. The contract negotiations for the television series yielded no result. However, a number of the members of the group, including Beck and Malina, became immersed in the discussions taking place at the Sorbonne. After several days this culminated in a decision by the students, who were considering the symbolic occupation of an important landmark in Paris, to seize the Odéon Théâtre de France. The idea had been proposed by Beck, who argued that this was in effect the reclamation of something that had originally been instituted as an anti-bourgeois cultural forum, but which had become enslaved by the system. On May 16 the Odéon was 'liberated', and a banner, announcing this annexation, was strung above the entrance to the classically-styled building. For the next week a number of open debates and confrontations, some amounting to continuous 24-hour performances, were held throughout the building. It is often assumed that the entire Living Theatre company were part of the occupying body at the Odéon. Neff rather pointedly identifies only seven members, including Beck and Malina, as involved in the occupation. According to her account, Steven Ben Israel, Gianfranco Mantegna, Jim Anderson, Carl Einhorn and Petra Vogt also participated (Neff, 1970: 30-31). Amongst those who

dropped in were Jean-Louis Barrault, director of the Odéon and a former friend to the Living Theatre, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, latterly known as ‘Danny the Red’, regarded as one of the key figures in the occupations of Nanterre and the Sorbonne.<sup>23</sup>

The involvement of the Living Theatre in what came to be referred to as ‘the events of May’ was widely reported. In actual fact the company spent less than two weeks in Paris. By May 21 the Living Theatre had arrived in Avignon to begin the final phase of work on *Paradise Now*. The accommodation secured there by Beck, at Vielle Ecole Frederick Mistral, was spartan and the group was forced to share the old high school accommodation with some 100 *enragés*, the name given to the more anarchist and/or militant French students involved in the riots and protests. The constantly arguing students invaded their living and working spaces, often sleeping on the wooden platform constructed outdoors for rehearsals. They also attempted to influence the content of *Paradise Now*. Often this amounted to demands for an open endorsement of violence in the work. This was philosophically untenable for the Living Theatre, although some members began to argue that the students had a point. Internal disputes about violence versus non-violence became more intense when the group took *Paradise Now* to America some months later, but while it was being created the focus was upon achieving the ‘beautiful anarchist non-violent revolution’, as members of the group were heard to say time and time again.

Generating the greater part of the content of *Paradise Now* took several weeks. In order to show what types of actions were assigned to the various parts of the work, I have annotated the original chart, inserting the principal stage movements and actor groupings as described in the definitive text (Malina and Beck, 1971). (This is shown in Figure 4.5 on pages 123 and 124)

The demonstrative or illustrative elements of *Paradise Now*, are with few exceptions carried out only by the actors and are contained in the Rites and Visions of each Rung. The invitations and cues for the audience to act are contained in the Actions. With the arrival at each Action there is, in principle at least, the opportunity for the audience to form into groups themselves, perhaps going off, then and there, to ‘storm the barricades’ in the ‘theatre of the streets’. More subtly, and in terms of physical embodiment of collectivity on stage, the following scenes involve specific group constructions using the bodies of the actors: Visions 1b, 2b, Action 2c, Rite 3a, Vision 3b, Rite 4a, Visions 6b, 7b, Rite 8a, Vision 8b. Action 8c is potentially the great moment of coming together of audience and actors as one large mobilised group. In two other scenes, Rites 5a and 6a, one of the actors becomes the focal point while other members of the group speak or move in concert.

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<sup>23</sup> Barrault was dismayed and incensed by Beck’s choice of the Odéon as the site of protest. Cohn-Bendit was regarded as a French radical but his nationality is in fact German. He entered German politics in later years, and, as at 2002, is a Green Party Member of Parliament in Germany.

Figure 4.5 Stage actions and actor deployment in *Paradise Now*

THE LIVING THEATRE		PARADISE NOW		COLLECTIVE CREATION	
		RITE		VISION	
THE REVOLUTION OF		PERMANENT REVOLUTION: CHANGE!		ACTION	
RUNG VIII: GOD AND MAN		8a.THE RITE OF I AND THOU (actors regroup center stage but with backs to audience; they begin 'dying', but they speak each other back to life)		8b.THE VISION OF UNDOING THE MYTH OF EDEN (actors form the 'tree of knowledge' centre stage, reprising the most salient aspects of the performance of that evening; actors carry spectators, and vice-versa, towards the exits and into the streets)	8c.THE STREET: (as houselights are brought up, and central playing area dimmed, actors send spectators on their way with statements such as 'The theatre is in the street. The street belongs to the people. Free the theatre. Free the street. Begin.', and other positive farewells)
THE REVOLUTION OF		BEING GLIMPSES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WORLD			
RUNG VII: HEAVEN AND EARTH		7a.THE RITE OF NEW POSSIBILITIES (in darkness, actors make sounds that seek harmony, as if in a new dimension, or on a new planet)		7b.THE VISION OF LANDING ON MARS (a group of five actors form themselves into a spaceship, whilst others enact other parts of the galaxy; eventually spaceship merges with actors who have formed into Mars; all disperse upon impact)	7c.HANOI/SAIGON: THERE IS A GROUP LIVING IN AN ANARCHIST SOCIETY. WHAT ARE THEY DOING? (actors again make hortatory statements, but this time more utopian 'no state', 'no money' etc.; they form a human 'catching blanket' or safety net for individual 'flyers', including audience members, willing to fall, eyes closed, from a higher point into their arms)
THE REVOLUTION OF		TRANSFORMATION THE STRUGGLE PERIOD			
RUNG VI: LOVE		6a.THE RITE OF OPPOSITE FORCES (a single actor lies limp centre stage, making a steady and clear sound, which the other actors either support or attempt to interrupt through voice or physical contact with the single actor; the actor is not diverted from his/her course)		6b.THE VISION OF THE MAGIC LOVE ZAP (actors use their bodies to create a number of pentagons, alters, walls, priests, with a sacrificial victim at the center of each arrangement; just as victim is about to be killed, victim offers throat, undoing and preventing the act of killing)	6c.CAPETOWN/BIRMINGHAM: THE BLACKS ARE CONFRONTING THE WHITES WITH REVOLUTION. HOW DO THEY OVERCOME? (actors again make statements about the relevant political context; pose questions to the audience)
THE REVOLUTION OF		ACTION THE PLAN GOES INTO EFFECT: BURN THE MONEY!			
RUNG V: REDEMPTION		5a.THE RITE OF THE MYSTERIOUS VOYAGE (a single actor 'trips out' according to his/her own mood, the other actors help the voyager along the way)		5b.THE VISION OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE RACES (actors begin by chanting antagonistic oppositions 'black/white', 'Jew/Christian' etc., but these evolve, partly through use of humor, into 'I/Thou' maxim of Martin Buber	5c.PARIS: THE FUTURE: THE NON-VIOLENT ANARCHIST REVOLUTION (actors make more hortatory revolutionary statements but the mood is now more constructive, post-revolutionary)

THE REVOLUTION OF	THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION: THE EXORCISM OF VIOLENCE APOKATASTASIS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF DEMONIC FORCES INTO THE CELESTIAL		
RUNG IV: THE WAY	4a.THE RITE OF UNIVERSAL INTERCOURSE (actors create an erotic body pile near downstage centre, making a low humming sound; members of audience can join in; two actors can separate if especially 'charged', caressing, following 'Maithuna' yoga practice, making genital contact etc.)	4b.THE VISION OF APOKATASTASIS (actors become executioner/victim pairs, enacting, twenty times over, the televised street shooting of a suspected Vietcong by a South Vietnamese officer; this opposition is 'undone' by dialogue based upon earlier rites until victim and executioner embrace)	4c.JERUSALEM: THE VICTIMS BECOME THE EXECUTIONERS. WHAT DO THE PACIFISTS DO? (actors utter provocative statements about Jews and Christians, advocating 'fucking' as a way of reconciliation)
THE REVOLUTION OF	GATHERED FORCES		
RUNG III: TEACHING	3a.THE RITE OF STUDY (actors gather on stage in seated spiral, first making Hindu 'mudra' body movements, and then speaking mantras; freeze)	3b.THE VISION OF THE CREATION OF LIFE (actors rise up with eyes closed, milling about blindly until contact with other actors leads them to form groups of five which become ecstatic undersea organisms, organic wholes)	3c.HERE AND NOW: THERE IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE THAT WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD (actors utter more-or-less agit-prop statements relating to wherever the work is being performed, encouraging 'radical action cells' to form amongst audience members, which can continue during and/or after the performance)
THE REVOLUTION OF	REVELATION THE DESTINATION MUST BE MADE CLEAR		
RUNG II: PRAYER	2a.THE RITE OF PRAYER (actors commune gently with spectators, whispering 'Holy hand, Holy shirt, Holy smile' etc., in a quiet prayer)	2b.THE VISION OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE NORTH POLE (actors regroup to act out polar expedition, creating three spokes of a wheel spinning around the central pole when they have all been drawn, pell mell, into the center; spin off again as a question is posed and answered; actors form the words 'anarchism' and 'paradise now' with their bodies as the ultimate answers to the questions)	2c.BOLIVIA: A GROUP OF REVOLUTIONARIES PLOT THEIR STRATEGY (some of the actors become a group of revolutionaries – Bolivia, Mexico, or wherever relevant to locality; actors utter hortatory slogans 'be the peasant', 'be the llama' etc.; audience expected to begin discussions on revolutionary action, which actors support or enact, encourage)
THE REVOLUTION OF	CULTURES THE CULTURE MUST BE CHANGED. PERCEPTION MUST BE CHANGED. SO THAT THE USEFUL NESS OF THE REVOLUTION CAN BE COMPREHENDED		
RUNG I: GOOD AND EVIL	1a.THE RITE OF GUERRILLA THEATRE (actors work as individuals throughout the space, working with individual audience members, saying 'I am not allowed to travel without a passport, take my clothes off; smoke marijuana' etc., within an increasingly hysterical atmosphere; actors take as many clothes off as local law will permit)	1b.THE VISION OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN (actors assemble in circle on stage in peace-pipe circle, making totem poles out of some of the actors, advancing and falling 'dead' when felled by the gunfire of civilization)	1c.NEW YORK CITY: 8,000,000 PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY (actors utter statements about the present conditions of living from their prone positions; wait for audience response; then they rise from the dead, as hippies or 'the new American Indians')



In effect, this means that at least half of the scenes in *Paradise Now* endorse, if not directly embody, the principle or ideal of the group. The general pattern is dialectical: the rites often focus upon the primacy (and vulnerability) of the individual; the visions valorise the unity of the collective; the actions pose a question to the audience about how to act. The implied answer is always that of the enlightened individual acting through the collective, a new synthesis. It is also no accident that the most individualised scenes in *Paradise Now*, Rites 1a and 1b, are situated at the beginning. The utterance of 'I am not allowed to...' and individual invocations of holiness in relation to sections of the spectators underscore the voyage of the 'One to the Many' that is integral to the work. This seems to have been a major part of the design of *Paradise Now* – to lead spectators up the rungs, starting as individuals, but as the voyage progresses, through cumulative visual demonstration, to unite them with the group and with fellow spectators.

Although there were previews on July 22 and July 23, according to Malina and Beck (1971: 153), the premiere of *Paradise Now* took place on July 24, and there were two performances over the next two days. The second performance was followed by a street procession, which was described as follows:

The jubilation that infects the spectators and actors at this point [Action 8c. 'The Street'] was most manifest in the incredible procession that followed the second performance of *Paradise Now* at Avignon. It ended at close to two in the morning. In the street, spectators surrounded the actors in a compact circle of about two hundred people. An intense bond of communication united them, despite that fact that most of them did not know each other. A humming sound rose spontaneously from the crowd, as if propelled by an invincible force, it split into ranks and with linked arms marched the length of two long streets before breaking up in front of the Cloister. (Biner, 1971: 213)

Regardless of the apparently benign sense of *communitas* accompanying this parade, it prompted an attempt by the Mayor of Avignon, already under siege from right-wing quarters in an election run-up, to serve an abatement order on the third performance. This did not arrive in time and the third performance went ahead as scheduled. The first two performances had produced both moments of enthusiastic response and outbursts of hostility amongst spectators, the latter coming mainly from right-wing students, but there was no anarchic rioting or destruction, as the Mayor feared there would be. Nevertheless, a meeting between the Mayor of Avignon and Beck and Malina took place on the next day, the Mayor demanding that *Mysteries* or *Antigone* be substituted for the remaining five performances of *Paradise Now* that had been scheduled. Furthermore, any planned street performances were prohibited. As a result, the Living Theatre summarily withdrew in protest on July 28th, issuing a public 'Statement of the Living Theatre' explaining the circumstances of the decision to withdraw.<sup>24</sup> As it happened, five other theatre groups booked to play at Avignon had already withdrawn, leaving only the Béjart and the Living Theatre as participants.

During the next three weeks only a single street performance of *Paradise Now* was given, followed, in late August, by a five-night run in Geneva. While the Swiss shows did not precipitate great controversy or unrest, the group was banned from returning to Switzerland shortly after its departure. Thus, although the

<sup>24</sup> See Biner (1971: 216-18) and Rostagno (1970: 222) for the full text of the 'Avignon Statement'.

group received a great deal of publicity during the months May through July of 1968, it had less to do with *Paradise Now* than with the general milieu into which the Living Theatre entered after its sojourn at Villagio Magico. Europe, especially France, was in open turmoil. The net effect was that *Paradise Now* was performed less than a dozen times in Europe in 1968 before the Living Theatre commenced a return-from-exile tour of America.

It is difficult to determine whether or not the elaborate architecture of *Paradise Now* really worked as it was intended. The most readily available film footage of the production is Sheldon Rochlin's official documentation (Rochlin, 1970), but this has been constructed using two different performances (December 1969 and January 1970) and lasts less than two hours. The second performance following its debut was clearly a success. In any event, it was apparently not absolutely critical, in the view of members of the group, for the show to go through the entire 24-scene sequence to complete the 'ascent' to the final rung on any given night. The theory was that whatever transpired was theatre, and in some respects, an early, inspired exit by spectator groups to make theatre in the streets was seen as a desirable outcome. Little exists, by way of exit polls, or documented avowals that *Paradise Now* launched any new groups or collectives, to suggest that the production created any permanent unities. This remains an open question.

What is clear, however, is that sometimes the event became so mired at a particular rite, vision, or action that a strategy was needed to move the process along. This was at times pre-planned, but quite frequently involved some hasty conferencing on the spot by the cast. Certainly, there was sufficient published reaction at the time to suggest that *Paradise Now* only frustrated and annoyed many theatre critics. For example, several excerpts of American reviews of *Paradise Now*, both pro and contra, are defiantly reproduced in Rostagno (1970) to accompany a photographic essay by Gianfranco Mantegna. And it appears that many performances were stopped or impeded in ways that the actors were not entirely comfortable with, despite the anything goes ethos espoused by the group.

### **America 1968-69: celebrating the collective in the midst of conflict**

The Living Theatre sailed from Le Havre for the United States aboard an Italian cruise ship, the M.S. *Aurelia*, on August 31, 1968. The ensemble at this time comprised 34 adults and nine children. The cruise ship was carrying a number of American students on their return journey from a summer abroad. The group performed *Mysteries* in exchange for a fare reduction. *Mysteries* was well received all around, but more importantly, there were daily discussions and classes, initiated not so much by the Living Theatre as by the students and their accompanying teachers. Members of the company were quick to join in these discussions, in which they apparently learned much of how American students thought and were also appraised of what was taking place in America. It was very much a mutual learning and exchange process, rather than a didactic one led by the more enlightened theatre group. If Malina's diary comments of the

time are any indication, it was an enriching experience for her and other members of the group: 'The ship has changed. We've talked at the forums, on anarchism, on Paris/Mai, on student power, on nonviolence, on conscientious objection. We've performed the *Mysteries*. We've lived with them. The staff members who guide the students are radicals. The students want to be radical but are afraid' (1984: 13).

This relatively congenial insight into the world of the American student should have put the Living Theatre on alert. American students in general were already politicised. One would expect this to have given them pause to think about the appropriateness of the structure of the keystone *Paradise Now*. The assumption in *Paradise Now* was that a dialectic needed to be shown repeatedly, or that, at the very least, the audience had to follow the cues of the actors, however open the ensuing action on any one rung might turn out to be. Yet if the group could engage a cross-section of students on board a ship so readily at the level of action, as Malina suggests, it would have made sense to assume that mutual learning and critical engagement could have taken place without a great spectacle in advance. Not only that, but the questions about how to act in the particular local context of performance might have been put first, and indeed, even pre-circulated, rather than presuming passivity and unawareness. The group could not have failed to realise that America had hardly been in a state of torpor for the last four years. There were now more groups and organisations, most of them gathered under the rubric of 'the Movement', than could be counted easily.

Regardless of the group's cultural and political preparedness for its return, much was made of the Living Theatre's arrival in New York on September 9, 1968. The return heralded the unveiling of four new works, at least for American audiences. It was also a kind of homecoming after three and a half years in self-imposed exile. However, motivation to return was not driven by sentimentality or homesickness. Nor was it driven only by an effusive spirit to spread the word of the 'beautiful non-violent anarchist revolution'. In fact, many members of the group, including Julian Beck, Judith Malina, and Jenny Hecht, viewed the whole prospect of returning to America with distinct trepidation (Neff, 1970: 89). Once there, others seemed jaded, and even bored, as the tour got underway (32). The Inland Revenue Service still had a lien on the company's income in the United States, and the police in New York, it was believed, were already on standby for trouble with the Living Theatre. These negative 'vibes' were mitigated principally by the pragmatic understanding that the group had to make money in order to survive. Earning potential in Europe had eroded partly because of its over-familiarity as a touring unit. America offered the prospect of a significant cash injection from audiences in reasonably large venues.

The group arrived in the immediate wake of riots in Chicago in August at the Democratic Convention. There were continual student protests and violent flare-ups at colleges across the country. Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated five months earlier. Senator Robert Kennedy had been murdered in June. African-American protest had shifted from demands for equality to the assertion of Black autonomy, particularly through the Black Panther Party, which was being targeted by the police and the Federal

Bureau of Investigation across the country. The Free Speech Movement had gathered momentum since its inception at Berkeley in 1964. The New Left and 'the Movement' were still recognised forces, even if the most celebrated organisation of the American New Left, Students for a Democratic Society, was in the process of imploding. Anti-Vietnam protest continued to escalate. The widespread catch-cry of the Movement was 'from protest to resistance', implying that the stakes had been raised. It was not enough to voice opposition, it was action that counted now, hence the occupation of campuses, the acts of passive resistance, the burning of draft cards. Although there had been no general strikes, as had happened in France, and elsewhere, the Living Theatre was entering a country that seemed to be headed deeper and deeper into civil strife. The country was also heading into winter. For a very modestly resourced group moving from place to place in caravan style this raised the prospect of travel problems and members suffering the discomforts of usual winter ailments such as colds and influenza.

For the group, by no means entirely ignorant of the state of civil unrest that had developed in its absence, the issue seems to have been largely a practical one of finding a new audience:

Despite their popularity and large following among the artists and intellectuals of Europe, they did have a limited repertory, and no matter how highly acclaimed this repertory remained, the Living Theatre was rapidly using up its audience, and *Paradise Now* had only made it more limited: it had been well received by public officials and the conservative majority at the Festival of Avignon, but riots had broken out after its premiere; nor had Geneva taken kindly to the public demonstrations following performances there. (Neff, 1970: 89)

There were also outstanding debts to be paid in Europe, and America promised a new source of much needed earnings.

The diffidence of Living Theatre members notwithstanding, there was great interest in America in bringing the group back to the USA. 'The Living' was politically and artistically hot, at least by reputation. Since March 1968 correspondence had been passing between the Living Theatre and an organisation called the Radical Theatre Repertory (RTR), a booking agency run by Saul Gottlieb, Beverly Landau, and Mel Howard.<sup>25</sup> The Radical Theatre Repertory duly organised a tour for fall of 1968. The arranged journey from east to west, taking in New York, New England, Philadelphia, the Mid West, and the North West, seemed idiosyncratic at best. The South was deemed off limits by the company for political reasons (and perhaps avoided out of fears for personal safety of group members). Unfortunately for the group, the tour seemed to unravel from the first days, at least from an organisational point of view. Instead of a fixed itinerary and confirmed venues there were still questions as to where some performances might take place, particularly in regard to possible engagements at Broadway venues. Furthermore, and almost fatalistically, there was a strong expectation within the group that some shows would be busted, and with that came the prospect of cancelled performances and delays.

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<sup>25</sup> Oda Jorges became involved at a later date.

There was (and still is) some uncertainty as to who was responsible for what in the actual itinerary created for the period September 1968 to March 1969. Neff (1970) suggests that the group seems to have been in its own worst own enemy in laying out certain ground rules, including a substantial guarantee up front, a prohibition on travel by air, supply of a fleet of five Volkswagen Microbuses (the Living Theatre's customary mode of transportation in Europe), and paid-for baby-sitters on each tour stop (84-88). The transport policy of the Living Theatre was particularly problematic. Not only were the travelling distances in America much greater than in Europe, much of the tour was set for the height of the winter months. It was a very inflexible line to take by any standards.

By the same token, the Radical Theatre Repertory, although staffed by people with considerable experience in theatre booking and production, seems to have been at best an unholy alliance, plagued by internal conflict and agendas of one sort or another. According to Neff, who travelled with the Living Theatre for the entire American tour, the end result of the union of the Living Theatre with RTR was disastrous:

No matter what truth or lies are buried in the endless flow of accusations and rebuttals, no matter what the basis (if any) of threatened lawsuits and investigations, the impression is that they all (including the company, which allowed it to happen) deserved one another, either because they were too stupid to realize the importance of what was at stake, or too avaricious to care. (79-80)

Whether or not Neff is being unduly harsh here, the fact remains that one of the most vital aspects of the tour, the regular transmission of income from shows and guarantees to pay the company a living wage, virtually ceased mid-way through the tour. Thus, from the Mid West (Madison, Wisconsin in January 1969) through the North West and on to California (March) the Living Theatre was starved of income, even by their own modest standards. On top of this, many in the group had gone down with influenza by the time it was heading west. Howard and Gottlieb came to violent blows during the course of the tour, police and lawyers becoming involved in disputes between the two.

This is not to say that the tour was a completely unmitigated disaster. In six months the Living Theatre played in more than 36 towns and cities, performing some 135 times.<sup>26</sup> There were, as anticipated, a number of arrests during the tour, beginning with the very first performance of *Paradise Now* at Yale on September 26. There were also scenes of pandemonium at some performances, downright hostile audiences in some locations, and critical attacks and dismissals in the press (See Rostagno, 1970: 225-37).

There were also several successes. Many college students participated in productions far more enthusiastically than their European counterparts. Some performances of *Paradise Now* were well received, notably in New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Neff believed the group gave its best performance of the tour (1970: 119), and in Chicago, where the company had anticipated extremely hostile reactions (130).

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<sup>26</sup> They performed *Mysteries* 28 times, *Paradise Now* 36 times, *Antigone* 27 times, and *Frankenstein* 26 times.

Despite these high points there does seem to have been a general pattern of disintegration from East Coast to West Coast. This was probably due to in some respects to attrition and exhaustion within an already weary group. The Living Theatre had not had a holiday, as such, since at least 1964, meaning almost five years of continuous work. Breaks between touring had usually been for the purposes of rehearsing new works. Resources were extremely meagre on this tour, even by normal standards. The bank accounts of the Living Theatre had been frozen by the Inland Revenue Service, which was still seeking recovery of money for the non-payment of taxes up to 1963. There was even a scuffle at a motel between motel staff and members of group over an unpaid accommodation bill (Neff, 1970: 166; Tytell, 1995: 254).

There were also problems at the conceptual level. The real coming apart was arguably attributable to the mismatch between the Living Theatre's agenda for emancipation, and the levels of revolutionary consciousness on the part of many of the intended recipients of the 'beautiful non-violent anarchist revolution'. This became glaringly obvious when the Living Theatre performed in Berkeley and San Francisco. Indeed, Neff and others have singled out the Living Theatre's appearances in Haight-Ashbury and Berkeley as the most ignominious moments of the American tour, painfully sheeted home by the fact that audiences participated in a way that left the group itself behind. It was also a matter of circumstances and timing. On the day the Living Theatre was booked to play in Berkeley there were violent altercations on Telegraph Avenue in the afternoon between police and students, partly over the threatened dismissal of Herbert Marcuse from Berkeley. The Berkeley performance of *Paradise Now* was reduced to a farce, getting only as far as fifth rung by midnight (a curfew had been imposed on the area by Governor Reagan). The audience more or less took over in direct challenge to the politics of the Living Theatre. The Living Theatre had paid lip service to the revolutionary theatre of the streets that day, but only three members had been present on Telegraph Avenue and none of those three wanted to perform in *Paradise Now* again according to Neff (1970: 167). The Living Theatre was seen by much of its San Francisco audience as copping out.

In terms of its effect upon critics, the Living Theatre's American tour seemed to leave no-one unmoved. For example, Irwin Silber wrote an impassioned open letter to the Living Theatre, which was published in a Living Theatre-themed issue of *The Drama Review* in spring 1969. It is worth quoting at length here because it encapsulates the sense of frustration and sympathy that many must have felt:

Let's talk first about America. Much has happened here in the last four years. In 1964-65, the hand-on-the-heart idealism of the civil rights movement still hung over most of us like a deadly neutralizing gas. Since then we have seen Watts, Newark, and Detroit. We have learned that fighting racism isn't a summer in Mississippi or a march through Alabama [...] We have seen the power structure try to buy off and suck off and win over the black movement – while murdering Malcolm X, jailing Huey Newton, and driving Eldridge Cleaver into hiding. We are a different people now, a new kind of movement, forged in the reality of the Pentagon and Chicago, given (and giving) a new kind of education at Columbia and San Francisco State. We read Malcolm and Che, Cleaver and Debray. We live in the world of Rudi Dutschke, Cohn-Bendit and the Mexican students. We face truths more easily now [...] To understand us, you must first understand Vietnam [...] Let tomorrow understand that a generation came of age in America in 1967 and

1968, the children of Vietnam [...] Where once we bore moral witness to our consciences by burning our draft cards and holding pray-ins for peace, in time we came to have a new understanding of our necessities – and we prepared ourselves for more direct actions when necessary [...] When you came back to us after the years of exile, we went to see you and to hear you and touch you with our hearts and minds open to you, knowing you to be flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. But we found that you seemed to know little of what had happened to us during those years you were away. We have no patience with your ‘games’ of confrontation and your stance of helplessness [...] Your concern with non-violence strikes as a self-righteous copout, and we wonder who appointed you guardians of the revolution’s purity [...] We cannot reject *you*. Too much of you is in us. You were our hearts and visions when we needed you most. You showed us the power of commitment and you did not hesitate to explore new paths of experience for us and with us [...] Your art – is in tune with our emotional needs. You understand something of what has shaped us and you have found the ways to show us that from the stage. Your anti-art suits our tempo, your collective suits our style. (Silber, 1969: 86-88)

For Silber, the tour was a missed opportunity. Instead of returning to a community, the Living Theatre had attempted to foist its own conceptions of community and politics on people as if it did not matter whom the group was addressing. Stefan Brecht’s reflections on the tour, published in the same issue of *The Drama Review*, focus more upon the problematics of a ‘civic theatre’ in an age where, Brecht believes, there is no community. He contrasts this with the weak anarchist politics projected by the Living Theatre:

The commercial theatre, retailing to merchants the motivated fates of individuals, is on its way out in this over-developed country. Its customers are vanishing into corporate employment [...] Yet a *civic theatre*, ceremoniously defining for the community the condition of man, is not about to take its place: for there is no community. But should the revolution of the world which is destroying the impersonalities of Occidental society, by sparing us those of Oriental despotism, favor us with community, a civic theatre – metaphysically metaphoric & mythical, spectacularly allegoric – will be in order [...] The temples will reappear as theatres – to regard TV as tribal communion is a feeble papist apology for our non-communal society. [...] Since the French Revolution, the communitarian ideal (*fraternité*) has been the prerogative of the socialists [...] Thus the two schools of socialism, anarchism and communism, provide the alternatives for a civic theatre . . . The Living Theatre performs as though it were the civic theatre of an emergent anarchist community [...] Their anarchism is modern American, suspicious of moral stricture, indifferent to economics, disdainful of the power of the social structure, sociologically nominalist: the State is a state of mind [...] Anarchism traditionally rejects participation in instituted political life as authoritarian in essence & consequences, but this new anarchism because of its psychology rejects as well such traditional alternatives as insurrectional conspiracy, syndicalism & the forming of such utopian economic communes as it itself tries for. (1969b: 47-49)

Without explicitly describing it as such, Brecht indicts an individualist, or at least psychologicist, anarchism, which the Living Theatre, in this sense an American theatre, seems to exemplify. In other words, the temper of the times in America is ultrademocratic, and the Living Theatre demonstrate its contradictions without overcoming them.

This being said, Brecht appreciates some of the attempts at *communitas* in the group’s work, which holds a certain aesthetic and spiritual appeal:

Communal groupings & activities and what seems to be communing (of performer with universe, of performers with one another, of Company with audience) by elevated tone & gesture & expressions of inwardness infectiously convey detached spiritual abstraction & the fusion of the spirits in a group spirit, a oneness of hearts & minds. They invite us, short-circuiting

communication by signs, to join dances and petting sessions, enlaced & swaying mantra sounding congregations, meditational interludes, voices becoming one, bodies touching, all moving together. In fact *most* of the imagery rather specifically conveys either the idea of a spiritually coherent & communing collective or else of its painful lack in the solitude of single individuals, lone or in crowds. The shows are invitations to join the spiritual community of the Company in the work of realizing the spiritual community of all humanity: by a transcendence of non-spiritual (because regimented) society. (67)

Ultimately, however, it is the Living Theatre's libertarian conception of the anarchist community that most offends Brecht:

We do not need the Becks' mock avowals to interviewers ('we are not yet a community') to know that anarchism has failed this Company as it did Catalonia in 1936. Not only does spontaneity not create its form but the grandiose harmony of these Passion plays is to the eye evidently not the organic life of free personalities in interaction but the conjoined product of directorial genius & of the self-sacrifice of a membership. [...] Anticipating an objection: no amount of directorial contributions from the members of the company in the original making of the plays would suffice to make the Company an anarchist community [...] And a community which is not anarchist in its essential activities – in this case the making of theatre – is simply not anarchist. (72-73)

Yet *Paradise Now*, although performed less than 90 times in total in Europe and America, created a lasting impression. It was more verbally and physically provocative towards the audience than earlier works.

Actors forcefully sought to get under the skin of the audience by direct verbal confrontation. A number of attendees were highly offended or intimidated by this, as several reviews and reviewers attested. Verbal harangues alone were nothing particularly new. The New Left and the Movement had already assimilated some of the agit-prop techniques of earlier decades, or, at the very least, people had got used to sit-ins, shouting slogans and verbally protesting and arguing in public. Being lambasted for one's middle-class, privileged position was nothing new in the 1960s.

Perhaps the reason why the work created such impact lies in the relentlessness of the revolutionary sloganeering, coming at the end of each 'rung', in the 'action' sequence, combined with the more communal elements. The audience, by and large, were required to watch up to 24 scenes in such a pattern that one in every three involved a great deal of verbal utterance. Hortatory or accusing statements also appeared in other scenes. Sheldon Rochlin's filming of *Paradise Now* (Rochlin, 1970) shows how confrontational the actors could be, although one has to bear in mind that these filmed shows were effectively the last performances of the work. One must therefore allow for a large measure of fatigue and stress in the performances that have been captured as the official record of *Paradise Now*. Some of the apparent vehemence of the actors can be attributed to the weariness of 18 months of touring the work and the feeling that the work was more than past its peak.

Even so, the play was designed to provoke, and when first launched, it must have been delivered with enthusiasm by the actors. Although the structure of the work was such that opportunities for peaceful,



perhaps affectionate, contact and interaction with the audience were clearly accommodated, the logistics of performance in large venues to large audiences seem to have predetermined the extent of involvement.

The use of nakedness no doubt created a certain impact. It was already relatively unremarkable by this point (after *Hair* and *Dionysus in 69*) for actors to appear naked before audiences. In the latter cases the emphasis tended to be upon showing the simple beauty of the naked body. The book of *Dionysus in 69* exploits the aesthetic appeal of the performers' bodies, for example. In *Hair*, a moment of nudity is used as a kind of shock tactic, revealing the body as suddenly freed from repression. The Living Theatre's use of nakedness was arguably more complex. While there were explicitly erotic overtones at certain points in *Paradise Now*, as actors and audience undressed and caressed, nakedness was also part of the Living Theatre's general thesis about collectivity. The actors, and audience, potentially, were unified not by the presence of props but by their absence. They were unclothed, both in the erotic body pile of the rite of sexual revolution, and in the toe-to-toe engagements, if not arguments, that arose between them and members of the audience. More than other theatres the Living Theatre seemed to be trying to blend a sense of vicariousness with one of utter ordinariness about the human body.

The Living Theatre also managed to create entirely new groups, at least in visual terms, and albeit ephemerally, when the invitation to come up on stage, become naked, and commune, not just with the actors, but with each other, was accepted. If audience members disrobed and added themselves to those already assembled on stage this was effective in terms of showing, in a communal form, the collectively estranged becoming renaturalised. It was like watching members of a new tribe, even though minutes before such people had been defined only as members of an audience group. This created a very strong visual impression of a larger whole or totality, created by combining bodies sculpturally on stage, whether as the collective orgasmic or tantric entity, or totems or vessels, or as elemental forces. Some of the collective sound effects, such as the use of humming of the group, rhythmic beats on the floor using parts of the body, were also conducive to forming the impression of an organism greater than the individual.

### **Berlin 1970: reorganisation or ultrademocratic overload?**

Whatever moments of *communitas* were achieved on stage, and in spite of the strong sense of community and collective creativity that developed within the Living Theatre over the years 1964-68, the group appeared to fragment gradually during 1969. In the wake of much controversy and a great deal of criticism from American radicals and critics alike the Living Theatre returned to Europe in April 1969 to tour *Paradise Now* along with the other works in repertory. This return lasted only nine months. An official announcement was issued on January 11, 1970, the day after the final contract performance of *Paradise Now* in Berlin. The Living Theatre was, according to this statement, to divide into four cells:

For the sake of mobility the Living Theatre is dividing into four cells. One cell is currently located in Paris and the center of its orientation is chiefly political. Another is located in Berlin and its orientation is environmental. A third is located in London and its orientation is cultural. A fourth is on its way to India and its orientation is spiritual. (Biner, 1971: 225)

The fact that a public statement was issued suggests that the Living Theatre was very conscious of its image as a tribal entity. Breaking up the group was a dramatic decision. The official statement implied that the need to fragment was based on the fact that the group had simply become unwieldy in size. It is quite possible, however, that opposing political, environmental, cultural and spiritual camps, rather than merely schools of thought, had developed within the Living Theatre, and this required some sort of rational explanation that glossed over internal disagreements.

The Paris cell was to be led by Beck and Malina (it was known as the 'Croissy cell') and this attracted some ten members of the existing group of 45. Steven Ben Israel and Henry Howard were to lead the Berlin cell. Rufus Collins was to lead the London cell, with a view to leading the Indian cell from there later, which he in fact did. The cell that went to India, calling itself the Lila Troupe, comprised Rufus Collins, Axel Hypolite, Leo Treviglio, Diana Van Tosh, and Alexander Vanderlinden, according to a *Rolling Stone* article of Oct 28, 1971 (22-25).

Within six months the Croissy cell was persuaded by visiting Brazilian artists to go and work with the poor in the *favelas* of Sao Paulo. Shortly thereafter several of the veterans from the other cells rejoined the Living Theatre bringing their numbers to 18. Most were imprisoned in July 1971 on drugs charges and were deported from Brazil in August after intense lobbying by friends in Europe and the U.S. Intending to return to Latin America, Beck and Malina went on the college workshop circuit to raise money. The pair then decided, with counsel from anarchist Murray Bookchin, that they should instead work at home as a collective, becoming a part of an ordinary working class community. A number of veteran members who had joined the other cells in the break-up of 1970 returned to the Living Theatre at this stage. Perkins (1982) lists the actors who returned, along with Malina and Beck, from Brazil after their arrest there and deportation in 1971 as William Shari, Roy Harris, Steven Ben Israel, Thomas Walker, Roy Levin, Jim Anderson, Luke Theodore, William Howes, Sheila Charlesworth, Pamela Badyk, Birgit Knabe, Hans Schano (Echnaton), Sergion Gidinho and Vicente Segura (246). Shari, Harris, Israel, Anderson, Badyk, Echnaton and Knabe were veterans from 1963-66.

In September 1972, when it regrouped again in Brooklyn, membership was augmented by Rufus Collins, Steve Thompson, Mel Clay and Pierre Biner, according to Tytell (1995: 312), also veterans from the 1960s. The group based itself in Brooklyn for three years, from 1971 to 1974, much of the time spent at protests and demonstrations, working in food co-operatives and generally researching the condition of the working class in the industrialised cities of the United States. This culminated in a decision to move to Pittsburgh to work on material to support steel workers. The move was heavily influenced by the fact that the Living

Theatre received a grant of \$22,500 from Pittsburgh's Mellon University to bring arts to the streets of Pittsburgh (Perkins, 1982: 236). The theatre based itself in a run-down area of Pittsburgh and members got themselves variously involved in community co-operatives, union activities, strikes and other grass roots actions. Although since that time the Living Theatre's fortunes have always remained mixed (there have been few celebrated and widely-praised new productions over the past 30 years), and the theatre has been forced to shuttle back and forth across the Atlantic in search of a permanent home, the general approach since the early 1970s has been to work more *within* communities rather than to work *at* communities or audiences in a confrontational way (see, for example, Beck and Malina, 1975; Ryan, 1971, 1974; Vicentini, 1975).

### Conclusion

The sober dissolution announcement of January 11, 1970, gave the impression of strategic a plan for devolution and redeployment of the resources of a large group in order to prevent it collapsing under its own weight. In fact, the group had been debating its own politics and future direction, often by way of impassioned argument and accusations within the group, since the Living Theatre's return to Europe from America in April 1969. After fulfilling some initial engagements, the group went to Morocco with the intention of creating a new work entitled *Saturation City*. Instead, while enjoying some of the local rites and customs of the townspeople, and openly flouting some of them with the group's own hedonistic lifestyle, workshops turned into discussions, some of them heated, about the future of the Living Theatre. No new work was created. The experiences of the group in Europe and America had been mixed and many members were exhausted. It did not seem possible to find a new direction or to generate new material.

The Living Theatre appears to have become caught in an ultrademocratic dilemma by the late 1960s. It was committed to a leaderless structure, but it had lost the means to prioritise action within the group. It seems to have chosen the least traumatic way it could in order to remove itself from this dilemma. Since any member should be allowed to do whatever he or she desired, it seemed inappropriate for any one person, or cluster of people, to dictate the future direction. Malina and Beck announced their intention to leave in September as it was returning to the European continent. Others could join them if they liked, but they were not reasserting themselves as the leaders in a slimmed-down, more politically focussed, Living Theatre. They were leaving the Living Theatre. They reasoned that the other members of the group were insufficiently independent of them as leaders to function as an anarchist community (Tytell, 1995: 270-71). Their decision seems more like a knight's move both to keep the group alive and to retain their presence as key figures, and perhaps this was unconsciously understood and accepted as such by other members. The decision was consistent with an adaptation of the leadership principle under conditions of putative non-leadership: dissolve the group rather than fire members, (in contrast to, say, R.G. Davis and Richard

Schechner, both of whom on certain occasions unilaterally reduced membership within the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group, respectively). Without invoking majority rule voting or discussing new decision-making structures Beck and Malina deftly avoided open pitched battles over power and control of the group.

The fact remains, however, that in the subsequent manifestations of the Living Theatre over several decades, the leaders were Judith Malina and Julian Beck. When Beck died in 1985, another strong pair-bond, in the form of Judith Malina and Hanon Reznikov, was in place to head the Living Theatre. This is not to say that Beck and Malina conspired to dominate the Living Theatre and made remarks about disappearing as directors only to deflect attention away from their strong leadership roles. They too were probably influenced by the ultrademocratic mood of the times and the impetus towards *communitas*. One way of dealing with the complexities of *communitas*, i.e., all of the existential, normative and ideological dimensions, was to reject rationalisation or consolidation in favour of dispersal, in anticipation of an informal or organic return to equilibrium as people made their own individual choices.

Overall, considering its achievements overall during the 1960s, both on and off stage, there is no question that the Living Theatre systematically challenged the theatrical frame as set out by Erving Goffman. There is also no question that the group, as a liminoid entity, achieved high levels of existential *communitas* both for itself, and some of its audiences. As a solidary or self-contained group it survived the rigours of several years of constant travel and meagre finances where other groups would not have lasted more than a few months. If there was any negative energy in the group it appears often to have been directed outwards, towards symbols of authority, or onto other groups, particularly audiences, even if this was not entirely deliberate. Living Theatre members fought the System, not one another.

Indeed, the group seems to have insulated itself very well, or developed a robust 'flight response', in Bion's basic assumption group terminology, to some of the internally destructive behaviour that other groups might experience under the uncertain conditions of group experience where the group is assumed to be good for the whole, but feared to be bad for the individual. This sense of security was reinforced by the fact that the Living Theatre contained a very stable pair-bond. At the time when leadership was a politically suspect concept and Beck and Malina as co-leaders had to wither away, they could remain intact as a pair-bond for the group. They also produced children. Indeed, despite the appearance of widespread licentiousness within the group, there were several stable pair-bonds yielding a number of children over a period of five years. Cynics would argue that the Living Theatre was always the property of Julian Beck and Judith Malina, and that with Beck's breathtaking powers of sophistry and Malina's intellectual brilliance they could always fit their theatre to the mood of the times without relinquishing control. If that was the case, however, they would surely have chosen an easier pathway for indulging the avant-garde pretensions they might have had. Clearly, they were committed both to the principle of the collective and to

communitas, even if they could not resolve some of the contradictions around these principles as they were conceptualised and practised in America at this time.

## Chapter Five

### The San Francisco Mime Troupe

It would be difficult to exaggerate the staggering number of hours that went into the ideas and form of new plays. Outsiders were brought in to give talks, reading lists appeared, and endless committees functioned or malfunctioned. To be sure there were wine and spaghetti feeds and the best parties in town and numerous romantic affairs and occasional bouts with drugs and nature. There were also obviously periods of laziness, incompetence, trucks crashed, scripts lost, tempers thrown. In a certain way Mime Troupers, Davis included, didn't take themselves too seriously – they were (and still are) a ribald and genuinely non-pretentious group. (Scheer qtd. in Davis, 1975c: 11)

#### Introduction

The organised chaos suggested in the above quotation can serve to obscure the fact that the San Francisco Mime Troupe was not a spontaneous phenomenon of the 1960s. It was founded in 1959 by R.G. Davis. The group was initially called the R.G. Davis Mime Troupe, and was affiliated with the Actors' Workshop of San Francisco. In the course of experimentation with mime, dance, Happening-style events and European avant-garde plays the Mime Troupe of the early-to-mid 1960s settled upon Commedia dell'Arte as a style of theatre appropriate for performing out-of-doors. The goal was to reach audiences that would not normally set foot inside a theatre. From 1963 the Mime Troupe's motto was 'Engagement, Commitment, and Fresh Air'. Adapted and reworked Italian Commedia pieces from the 16th and 17th centuries were presented as annual seasons in Bay Area public parks. Adaptations included *The Dowry* (1962), *Tartuffe* (1964), *Candelaio* (1965), and *The Miser* (1966).

From the mid-1960s works were created that drew directly from current events in America, or American history, such as R.G. Davis and Saul Landau's *The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* (1965). The concept of 'guerrilla theatre', first articulated by Davis in 1965, was implemented in a number of pieces, notably *Centerman* (1966), *Search and Seizure* (1966), and *Output You* (1966). Guerrilla theatre resembled agitprop, but it eschewed a political party line: the information had to be relevant to the immediate community context. At the same time the Troupe's work became more overtly politicised. Its presentation of Brecht's *Exception and the Rule* (1965) was accompanied by a talk on Vietnam by Robert Scheer, who had recently returned from the war zone. And when the Commedia form was used, it was given more explicit connection to current events. For example, the adaptation of Goldoni's *L'Amant Militaire* (1967) was a direct commentary on America's involvement in the Vietnamese conflict.

By this time the number of people associated with the group exceeded 50. However, a typical show used between seven and ten stage performers. Although the group performed mainly in the public parks of the

San Francisco Bay Area, it often premiered its work indoors. Such events took place in rather modest rehearsal, performance and administrative premises after the Mime Troupe ended its close affiliation with the Actors' Workshop of San Francisco and the latter's Encore Theatre space in 1963. The Troupe's headquarters tended always to be in working-class areas. Premises were often shared with organisations that were aligned with the New Left, such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the San Francisco Newsreel. Indeed, the Mime Troupe was closely associated with the Movement in the mid-to-late 1960s. When Davis was arrested in 1965 for playing in the parks without a permit, the local countercultural community rallied around to raise money for legal expenses. The Mime Troupe set about 'liberating the parks'. When New Left protests were staged, such as Free Speech Movement rallies and demonstrations at Berkeley, or actions to protest American involvement in Vietnam, the Mime Troupe would dispatch a unit such as the Gorilla Marching Band to add colour to the events.

The San Francisco Mime Troupe was also much involved in the less overtly political aspects of the counterculture. When the Summer of Love unfolded in Haight-Ashbury between late 1966 and mid-1967 the San Francisco Mime Troupe was there to herald some of the key events. At this time some of the principal members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe defected permanently to found the San Francisco Diggers, a group which took its name from the 17th century insurrectionary movement in England led by Gerrard Winstanley. One of the initial Digger moves was to demand a reorganisation of the San Francisco Mime Troupe along more anarchist collectivist grounds. The Diggers promoted the view that everyone is a 'life-actor' and that one should be free to do his or her 'own thing'. They advocated, and set up, free, moneyless, institutions and practices, such as the Free Store and they distributed free food in the parks. The group also created several theatre-in-the-streets events to liberate the city and its citizens. Although this group was a separate entity, there was a strong sense that, by association, and through the Mime Troupe's own activities, the Mime Troupe had effectively theatricalised the countercultural scene in the Bay Area.

As the late 1960s unfolded the San Francisco Mime Troupe became more radical still. It was also becoming unwieldy in Davis's view. In a unilateral move he reduced the size of the group from 59 to 14 in May 1967. The group sought to align itself with militant groups such as the Black Panthers even though almost all members of the Mime Troupe were young, white and middle-class. It also began to attract people with hard-line Maoist beliefs. From 1968 Davis's position as founder and director drew repeated criticism from within the group. A notionally more democratic decision-making structure, the Inner Core, was argued for, and implemented, but without satisfactory results. In 1969, on Davis's urging, the Mime Troupe undertook to stage Brecht's *Congress of the Whitewashers or Turandot* (1969-70). While the production itself was relatively successful, it heightened the tensions within the group, leading to Davis's permanent departure in 1970, and that of his primary assistant, Sandy Archer, shortly thereafter. The more dogmatic Maoists also left at this time, leaving the remaining members, without great preparation, to reorganise the San Francisco Mime Troupe as a collective.

My primary interest is in the process that led to this crisis point and the group paradigm that operated during the 1960s while Davis was director of the Mime Troupe. A number of studies of the San Francisco Mime Troupe have been made focussing upon the working process within the group, particularly in regard to major productions. These have covered the 1960s (Jones, 1971: 310-34), 1970s (Edelson, 1975), and 1980s (Morris, 1989: 297-314). Recently, Orenstein (1998) has discussed the politics of the Mime Troupe in terms of the styles of theatre used over several decades. In these discourses, and in other profiles of the Mime Troupe (e.g., Shank, 1982: 59-74), the proposition that under Davis's leadership there was, at best, a kind of participatory autocracy in place, tends to go unchallenged:

The history of the San Francisco Mime Troupe can be divided into two periods. The first period, 1959-1970, covers the time from the creation of the company by R.G. Davis until the company's rebellion against his leadership and the reorganization of the Mime Troupe as a collective. The second period, from 1970 to the present, includes the history of the Mime Troupe as a collective, a time when the Mime Troupe became a mirror of social change rather than a mere commentator upon it. Although collective creation, in various forms, was used in both phases, collective creation has become the dominant method of artistic production since Davis's departure. (Morris, 1989: 202-3)

Such a view conflicts with Davis's own account of the history of the group, *The San Francisco Mime Troupe: The First Ten Years* (1975). There are a few exceptions to the above within the critical domain. Bigsby (1985: 339) alludes to, but does not expand upon, a general wave of anti-leadership in the 1960s in his profile of the group. Edelson (1975) discusses the Marxist political philosophy of Davis, while Doyle (1997) connects the anarchist radicalism of the Diggers with the radical politics of the early Mime Troupe (48-92). In terms of group structure, however, there is still a widely accepted view that the San Francisco Mime Troupe was essentially a 'one-man-band' for the first decade of its existence (Cohn, 1980; Holden, 1975; Shank, 1974; 1977).

Most treatments of the Mime Troupe focus upon the choice of different dramatic styles or the manner of creating particular works, and they deal with the dynamics of the group and its apparent sudden transformation from autocracy to democracy without serious attention to the latter as an evolutionary process. In this chapter, I do not rehearse the full production history of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, but concentrate upon those works which appear to shed greater light upon an evolving group dynamic.

It is important to note that, compared to my discussions in Chapters Four and Six, I do not analyse the on stage movements and actions of the actors in given productions in great detail, principally because they did not usually deviate far from a basic style that wedded Brecht to Commedia and/or mime. Gestures were stylised, speech was declamatory. Distancing was provided by mask and costume. Unlike theatres such as the Living Theatre and the Performance Group, the Mime Troupe did not explore experiments in audience participation and stage construction. The make-shift outdoor wooden apron stages positioned Mime Troupe actors in a relatively exposed and flat plane. Performances were deliberately framed to avoid psychological ambiguity or multiple interpretations. There were no obvious attempts to convey 'groupishness' or



communitas in bodily formations by actors on the stage except insofar as this was consistent with Brecht's relatively simple concept of 'groupings' to denote the power of the collective vis-à-vis the individual, as discussed in the previous chapter on the Living Theatre.

Instead, I concentrate upon writings about the San Francisco Mime Troupe of the 1960s, particularly Davis's monograph of 1975, together with other published or printed participant comments, in order to determine more clearly the group paradigm that evolved during the so-called Davis era. I argue the following:

- a) The existential communitas dimension of the group was not actively encouraged;
- b) the normative and ideological communitas dimensions of the group, i.e., its adherence to the revolutionary philosophies of collectivity as espoused by Marx, Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara, were extremely well developed and provided an underlying group paradigm;
- c) the group was, however, situated right at the centre of the countercultural milieu, in which ultrademocracy was fully embraced by many young people; and
- d) the group experienced two distinct waves of ultrademocracy: the first, in the form of the San Francisco Diggers, did not directly threaten the leader of the group (the Diggers left), but it destabilised it; a second wave of militant revolt caused two leadership figures to leave and created a period of instability that was subsequently resolved when a new shared leadership structure emerged.

### **1959-61: experimentation with form**

R.G. Davis was originally from Brooklyn. He completed a degree in Economics in the early 1950s (c.1951-55), studying for two years at the University of Ohio followed by a further two years at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. His initial interest in performance was in the area of modern dance, precipitated in part by seeing the José Limon Dance Company in 1951. During his studies at Ohio and New Mexico he took classes in dance and also attended a six-week dance class at Connecticut College. He became impressed with the possibilities of mime after seeing Marcel Marceau on tour in the United States, although he has often been at pains to point out since then that the Mime Troupe's mime owes more to Chaplin than to Marceau. Edelson (1975: 78) usefully clarifies this distinction by emphasising that Davis has argued that mime denotes a relationship between actor and object, whereas pantomime is simply imitation. In 1956 he went to study with Paul Curtis at the American Mime Theatre in New York. Davis quickly became dissatisfied with Curtis's Method-based approach to mime (Davis, 1975c: 13). He won a Fulbright fellowship in 1957, which allowed him to travel to Paris and study with Etienne Decroux for several months.

Davis then returned to America, and moved to San Francisco in July 1958, having found New York less than conducive as a place to resettle (15). He quickly secured a position as assistant director at the highly regarded Actors' Workshop of San Francisco. Shortly after joining the Actors' Workshop, in the first half of 1959, Davis 'hustled a small group' of Workshop actors together with students from the private classes he was running (18). This group was called the 'R.G. Davis Mime Troupe'.<sup>1</sup> Rehearsals took place at Davis's own studio at 85 Brady Street in the light industrial district of the inner city. The emphasis on mime and physical action was deliberate. In a discussion of Brecht in relation to the Mime Troupe Davis has commented:

The Mime Troupe started in 1959 doing silent mime (the art of Chaplin – Marceau does pantomime) with the idea of restoring movement to a stage crippled by decades of realism. We broke into noise, and then speech, when our ideas became more complex; we now do plays, but mime is still the point of departure for our style, in which words sharpen and refine but physical action carries the substantial meaning. (1972: 142)

The R.G. Davis Mime Troupe worked initially as a moonlighting adjunct to the Actors' Workshop. The actual debut of the group was in October 1959, at a playhouse in North Beach, the bohemian quarter of San Francisco at the time. The event was called *Mime and Words* and included solo mimes and a talk on mime by Davis. Weeks later the *Mime and Words* event, including a piece called *Games - 3 Sets*, plus two other works and the talk on mime, was performed at the San Francisco Art Institute. The repertoire featured more or less conventional mime routines such as 'Man with a Stick', 'Bird in Flight', 'White Collar Day' and 'City Dweller' (Davis, 1975c: 195). Davis both performed and directed on these occasions. The group, such as it was (there is no evidence of a formal ensemble structure at this stage), numbered less than ten members.

At this point Davis was already at odds with Herbert Blau and Jules Irving over the approach taken at the Actors' Workshop, which by the conventional standards of Broadway or regional theatres at least, was regarded as progressive, often staging non-commercial existential or absurdist European plays. Davis was troubled by what he saw as its dependence on literary theatre (versus non-verbal forms), its elitism and its eclecticism (Edelson, 1975: 44). Doyle (1997) stresses the importance of an oppositional focus for Davis in the development of his style:

He seems to have grown as an artist in reaction against the Actors' Workshop, a response that exemplifies a recurring theme in Davis's career. His artistic vision has always required a structure of opposition against which to define itself. (52-53)

This ability, or tendency, to apprehend a larger and threatening external force, as noted in regard to the Living Theatre in the previous chapter, and as argued by Kanter (1972) in relation to commitment maintenance mechanisms in communal experiments, is important for engendering group solidarity. Just as Living Theatre members, particularly Julian Beck, perceived a foe in any manifestation of government,

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<sup>1</sup> Note that in his own chronology (Davis, 1975c: 195), and on the official Mime Troupe company history webpage, it is entitled the 'R.G. Davis Mime Studio and Troupe' [<http://www.sfmt.org/sfmt/archives/chronlgy.html>].

whether in America, Europe, or South America, Davis inculcated an anti-establishment ethos in the Mime Troupe. One of the major benefits of such an externalisation is that it may act as a safety valve. Anger, dissatisfaction and misgivings can be directed outwardly rather than being deliberately or inadvertently internalised. It also provides a teleological narrative, a sense of a superordinate goal or cause against which the collective forces of the group must be marshalled.

Bearing in mind Bion's claims about group process and basic assumptions about leaders within groups, such an outwardly directed focus would also mitigate a tendency to look inside the group for a threatening authoritarian presence. Whilst this can turn easily into demonisation of imagined foes and become an end in itself, Davis seems to have been able to parlay his own misgivings about the organisations he saw as aligned with the Establishment into a *raison d'être* for the San Francisco Mime Troupe. This set the tone for the Troupe as a theatre of resistance, not merely a theatre of protest.

After the first forays into coffee house performances regular shows were staged at the Encore Theatre, a basement space rented by the Actors' Workshop as their principal theatre at 430 Mason Street (at Geary) on the North Beach/Chinatown border. Programme notes for these events pointed out that admission was free because the R.G. Davis Mime Troupe was underwritten by the Actors' Workshop (Davis, 1975c: 19). The Actors' Workshop received a Ford Foundation grant that allowed it to pursue 'expanded activities'. The programme notes added that donations from the audience were encouraged. The shows were presented after normal working hours, and were a mixture of silent pantomime, poetry, lectures and movies. Accordingly, the first Encore Theatre season by the R.G. Davis Mime Troupe, which ran from December 11, 1959, to June 28, 1960, was called *The 11th Hour Mime Show*.

Such shows combined actors, dancers and mimes. The opening pieces of the show were often group inventions, which varied from one performance to another. The set pieces in the show that followed were composed by Davis and performed by the company. Some elements were deliberately designed to shock the audience. A few were to all intents and purposes Happenings, but were described simply as *Event I*, *Event II*, and so forth. For example, *Event II* contained a sequence in which Davis and actress Judy Goldhaft, borrowing from Joe Chaikin's mirroring exercises (cf. Living Theatre's *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* [1964]), imitated each other's movements as their clothing disappeared (Davis, 1975c: 24). The group sometimes used material that was being worked upon in rehearsal during daytime work at the Workshop as a premise for after-hours experimentation. For example, Davis claims that while they were working on Beckett's *Endgame* as Workshop members, they also worked on his *Act Without Words II*: 'Rehearsals began after Workshop shows, around 11:00 p.m. and continued until four in the morning' (20).

The fact that the group worked unpaid after hours, in both a literal and figurative sense, often rehearsing until the early hours of the morning following normal work at the Actors' Workshop, suggests a strong

sense of group cohesiveness. Yet there is little to suggest that the R.G. Davis Mime Troupe was a radical political organisation with a radical political agenda, or that its structure reflected an absence of hierarchy; Davis was the auteur director. Nevertheless, according to Ken Dewey, notable at the time, and subsequently, for his work with Happenings and arts administration, there was an abortive attempt to form a more radical entity in these early days. Dewey also worked as an assistant director at the Actor's Workshop of San Francisco in the late 1950s. Like Davis, he felt he could not experiment as freely as he would like at the Workshop:

I formed the A.C.T., the American Cooperative Theatre, which was composed of Ann Halprin, Ronnie Davis, Lee Brewer (sic), and myself. The intention was to form a cooperative which would pool our resources of personnel and would raise money collectively. In its original form, it never got off the ground; so Lee Brewer and I kept it together. (Dewey qtd. in Kostelanetz, 1968: 168)

This is noteworthy because it suggests, later Mime Troupe lore notwithstanding, that there was an early commitment by Davis to a more egalitarian form of organisation than simply the director-led company. Furthermore, when the Mime Troupe later secured its own studios, there was an attempt to start a theatre cooperative. A flier for fall classes of 1962 announced a new studio and theatre: 'A cooperative has been formed consisting of 5 people who have banded together to foster creation in the theatre.' Its name was Art V Studios and it does not seem to have developed far (R.G. Davis Papers, Box 6, item 168). It is also important to note that the word 'cooperative' is used here by Dewey, and by Davis, rather than, say, collective. A cooperative suggests the sharing of facilities and resources for work activity, but separation of individual work roles. A collective generally entails an equal distribution of work activity and work roles. Later in the decade the word cooperative seems to disappear almost entirely from the lexicon in radical theatre in favour of the collective and the communal, terms which were often used interchangeably in the 1960s to indicate a sense of togetherness rather than denoting a specific type of organisational structure.

Notions of collaborative alliances aside, for all intents and purposes the R.G. Davis Mime Troupe was at this point simply a small experimental group with a strong leadership figure. A typical show numbered less than ten performers and a half-dozen production workers. The late night shows often permitted the performers latitude for improvisation: an individual could introduce unexpected elements to which the other performers had to respond. This encouraged the group to work collectively to integrate elements of chance into performance, building a sense of the ensemble as an organism rather than a parade of virtuoso talents.

During this formative period, and this may have added to a sense of solidarity, the group operated under the auspices of an existing legitimate theatre, albeit one with an avant-garde reputation, i.e., the Actors' Workshop. Some members of the Mime Troupe were simultaneously Workshop members. Within two years, however, Davis explicitly distanced the Mime Troupe from the Actors' Workshop. The main issue was potential capture by the Establishment. A substantial Ford Foundation grant to the Actors' Workshop, in Davis's view at least, created a condition of dependency that he doubted the Workshop could

successfully resist. This led Davis to declare the Mime Troupe a stand-alone theatre in mid-1962. That the decision was largely his is indicated by the loss of most of the existing Mime Troupe membership at this point (Davis, 1975c: 197).<sup>2</sup>

Although the politics of the group may not have been clearly delineated at this point insofar as it was not aligned with a particular movement, Davis himself was interested in what other radical theatre groups were doing. For example, Davis periodically visited New York in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He saw the Living Theatre's *The Connection* (1959) and at least one other production at the group's Fourteenth Street venue, i.e., Brecht's *Man is Man* (1962). Davis also saw Kenneth Brown's *The Brig* (1963) around March 1964, when it was running at another theatre after the IRS had closed the Fourteenth Street venue. On these visits he talked with Beck and Malina about what they were trying to achieve (Davis, 1975c: 130-32). Whilst Davis had misgivings about the style of theatre he felt he was seeing at the Living Theatre, which in his view demonstrated things without analysing them, he was nonetheless impressed by the activism of the Living Theatre's founders.

Furthermore, Edelson (1975: 24) notes that as early as 1958 Davis was considering material drawn from earlier forms of radical theatre: 'Among his notes from that year is a list of plays under consideration for a new theater, including Odet's (sic) *Waiting for Lefty*, Brecht's didactic plays and living newspapers.' In the early 1960s Davis started collaborating with current political activists such as Saul Landau and Nina Serrano, both of whom had helped found the journal *Studies on the Left* (Doyle, 1997: 56). He also worked with Robert Scheer, another political radical, who was editor of *Ramparts* at the time, suggesting that at some point he moved beyond the idea of simply reprising earlier political plays to incorporating contemporary politics within a specific style of theatre.

### 1962-65: Commedia dell'Arte and politics

In the latter part of 1961 the Mime Troupe began to explore the possibilities of Commedia dell'Arte. Highly attuned to the visual aspects of performance, Commedia dell'Arte uses half masks, caricatured costume, exaggerated gesture and non-naturalistic two-dimensional sets and backdrops. Its roots are often traced to the Mimic form, combining word, song, gesture and dance. The Commedia form dates back to classical times, from the Dorian Mimes of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C., to the Roman mimic drama and Atellan farce of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. It is important to note that neither classical nor renaissance mime were confined to silent imitation (a perception that has sometimes caused problems for the San Francisco Mime Troupe to this day).

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<sup>2</sup> Although formal connections were severed in 1963, Davis appears to have maintained some sort of dialogue with the Actors' Workshop, and on certain occasions the Mime Troupe hired the Encore Theatre belonging to the Actors' Workshop for the premiere of a new show. Similarly, even after Davis's departure from the Mime Troupe in 1970, he continued to speak positively on behalf of the Mime Troupe to wider audiences in spite of his misgivings about the direction in which he believed the Troupe was going.

Commedia as a vehicle for political comment may have seemed slightly archaic to some in the 1960s. The Theatre of the Absurd, the Theatre of Cruelty and Brecht's theatre, all of which make great use of mask and mime, and which borrow from traditions such as Commedia, would have had a more overtly modern appeal for many theatres. Yet Commedia dell'Arte provides a set of operating rules which would have appealed to theatre practitioners of the 1960s.

Firstly, there is no detailed linear narrative or complete text created by a playwright or author. There is instead a scenario or *sogetto*, chosen as the basis for performance by the *concertatore* or leader, producer and prompt-holder of the company who must

before the performance, supervise the scenario. His duty is not merely to read over the plot, but to explain the characters, giving their names and special features, to detail the plot of the play, the locality of the action, and the houses, to enumerate the *lazzi* and all the necessary items in the plot, and to see to all the properties necessary, such as letters, purses, pens, etc., as noted at the end of the scenario (Perrucci qtd. in Nicoll, 1963: 226)

In Nicoll's view 'the *concertatore* is therefore a combination of the modern "star," producer, and stage-manager. He is the descendant of the *archimimus* of Roman days' (227). It is not difficult to see a correspondence here between the way R. G. Davis operated as Director of the Mime Troupe and the *concertatore* figure.

Another appealing feature of Commedia during the 1960s relates to the fact that although there is a scenario, a great deal depends upon the improvisational abilities of the principal actors, who work with a set of stock characters for their performances. Their abilities are tested by the entries of other actors, both major and minor part players, to whom they must at least temporarily defer. *Lazzi*, which are set 'pieces of stage action' independent of the episodes outlined in the scenario, are dropped periodically into scenes.

The simplicity and directness of the Commedia form was very much in keeping with the nascent countercultural mood of closer interaction between people and the removal of barriers. The Commedia audience has little cause to be distracted by fine details of *mise-en-scène* or by the mental lives of the characters.

By the same token, Commedia requires a certain discipline of movement and unity of appearance, avoiding what Davis saw as the avant-garde eclecticism of theatres such as the Actors' Workshop. Yet Commedia is neither too inflexible nor too prescriptive to rule out experimentation. As Edelson points out, Commedia extracts elements from other forms without creating a complete form itself:

It created and inherited a gallery of stock characters whose speeches and activities were orchestrated by a scenario, a scene-by-scene description of the intrigue, of the entrances and exits of the actors, and of their stage business. It used no written dialogue: the actors committed to memory a store of speeches, phrases and jokes (*lazzi*) appropriate to their character and selected on the spur of the moment to suit the scenario being performed. (1975: 54)

This element of the unexpected provided continuity for the Mime Troupe in the development of its ensemble approach. The actors could now hide behind masks, but not behind the plot or a set script as such. The animation of a character depended both upon the other actors and the audience, whose members were free to interject in support or disagreement. In this sense it was interactive theatre, relying upon the collective wit of performers and audience. In terms of a group ideal, it suggests, despite the fact that audience members were not invited or required to take the stage, that there was by definition an expanded concept of the group, i.e., the group was the neighbourhood or the community (but not City Hall). This was reinforced by the fact that the audience could leave at any time.

The subject matter was also important. An Italian audience of the 17th or 18th century would expect, and would get, a humorous critique of pretentious middle-class values in a *Commedia* piece. Indeed, Davis claims that *Commedia* was chosen by the Mime Troupe because of its intrinsically 'working-class viewpoint' (1975c: 31). Furthermore, despite the stock characters and costumes, it was a versatile mode of performance: 'Our interest in *Commedia* is not antiquarian. We use it because it is funny and adaptable and because comedy is ultimately more serious than tragedy or realism' (142). Traditionally, *Commedia* tended to deal with the machinations of merchant families and the frustrations of young lovers, although it often coincided with more serious commentary upon larger social and historical events.

*Commedia* had other important democratic dimensions. The actors usually wore masks or make-up that obscured or exaggerated their own visages, making it difficult to distinguish one performer from another. The Mime Troupe was, in theory, more a group of articulate clowns than several individual talents showcasing their respective virtues, although one suspects that, in keeping with the historic tradition of *Commedia*, there were in fact star performers among the cast who excelled at certain types of characters or who gave a distinctive touch to any role.

The iconography surrounding the early productions tended to reinforce the personal anonymity of the actors – cartoons and caricatures were used for artwork instead of star-portraits of actors. There is an important contrast here with groups such as the Living Theatre and the Performance Group. It is perhaps most readily apparent when comparing monographs on the groups. Davis's published account of the activities of the Mime Troupe (1975c) contains several photographs, but none identify particular individuals. His photographic portrait on the back cover is deliberately unflattering. Living Theatre books such as Malina and Beck (1971) and Rostagno (1970) invariably contain large numbers of photographs of group members, generally in ensemble settings. Individual actors are not usually singled out, but they are often portrayed as aesthetically appealing, beautiful people, sometimes in juxtaposition with grotesque images from the productions themselves. The Performance Group's book of *Dionysus in 69* (Schechner, 1970c) contains individual portraits of the cast, very much in the mode of résumé shots, and photographic material of relatively attractive young actors in different scenes far outweighs text.

Also, the Mime Troupe style was comic; it appealed to a universal human faculty. Even if people could not understand the spoken language, the physical language could make them laugh. Furthermore, in keeping with the historical practice of Commedia performance, the Mime Troupe chose to present shows in public places. There was no charge to watch the show. People paid according to what they felt the performance was worth and/or what they could afford.

The first Commedia dell'Arte-influenced production was *The Dowry*, based on Molière's *Fourberies de Scapin*, his *L'Avare* (*The Miser*), and Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters*. It was premiered at the Encore Theatre in January 1962. *The Dowry* was then taken directly to the people, but was performed in public parks instead of the street for obvious logistical reasons (space, noise, audience comfort, local ordinances). The first outdoor public performance was in May 1962 in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Another took place shortly afterwards in Washington Square Park in North Beach, which could still at this point be described as an Italian neighbourhood (North Beach had been much favoured by beat writers and artists in the 1950s and was rapidly gentrifying). The Mime Troupe was conscious of presenting Italian Commedia, however modified, before an audience of people of Italian extraction. This was seen as a step towards working within a community of ordinary people.

There were, however, only two outdoor performances of *The Dowry* that year. This was all that the San Francisco Parks Commission would permit at the time. The Parks Commission insisted on vetting the proposed works for anything that might be obscene or against the public interest, a requirement that became increasingly problematic as the 1960s progressed. A few further indoor performances took place at the Spaghetti Factory, a North Beach cabaret venue, in June 1962. This marked the deliberate distancing of the Mime Troupe from the Actors' Workshop.

In practical terms, far from being a studied revival of renaissance theatre, *The Dowry* was, for the Mime Troupe, an exercise in putting together and performing everything the group knew, or could learn quickly, about Commedia dell'Arte. Although the scenario was fixed by Davis, the performers improvised as best they could during the show. The group deliberately sought to involve the audience in a non-threatening manner:

From the first commedia our opening format was designed to help the performers warm up in front of an audience and let the audience in on the 'secrets' of backstage.

We would set up the stage, get into costume and makeup (or masks), play music, loose and easy, gather into a circle and do warm-up physical exercises while singing songs. At first the songs were from an Archive record of the Central Middle Ages, often simple rounds, Christmas tunes, and eventually, tunes from Wobblies and political songs from Italy, Mexico and even some we wrote. (Davis, 1975c: 37)

Edelson (1975) notes that a performer playing a simple recorder often started these tunes. The emphasis was on simplicity and transparency to avoid unnecessary alienation of the audience.



Such an approach stands in sharp contrast to the Living Theatre of the *Paradise Now* period. Although the Living Theatre also warmed up, chanted, and grouped itself in full view of the audience, for the most part this was usually framed as a kind of sacrament. The audience could, in principle, participate in some of the Living Theatre's preliminaries, but this often required a knowledge of yoga or Eastern meditation or a fascination with the Orient, and a lack of personal inhibition. Similarly, the Performance Group used exercises to begin *Dionysus in 69*, but they were 'psychophysical' in nature and not immediately accessible to most audience members. Invitations to join in with the Performance Group came after the actors had established their authority in the performance space. By contrast, the Mime Troupe sought to demystify rather than mystify the theatrical experience, forming a more gently inclusive connection between the performing group and the audience as a group. However, full audience participation, in the sense of joining in the stage action, was seen as irrelevant to the task at hand, a point which arguably shows that the Mime Troupe had a sense of separation from its audience at a fundamental level: the Mime Troupe was there to teach and the audience was there to learn.

Many of the open-air performances over the subsequent three years were Commedia adaptations, including Machiavelli's *Mandragola* or *The Root* (1963), Beolco's *Ruzzante's Maneuvers* (1963), Molière's *Tartuffe* (1964), Bruno's *Candelaio* (1965), and Molière's *The Miser* (1966). In each instance, while there was a sense of providing public entertainment, there was also a conscious effort to index the pieces, however subtly, to current social and political events. To this end, Milton Savage worked on *The Root* and *Ruzzante's Maneuvers*, indexing the former to the nuclear family rather than the church. Nina Serrano, a leftist colleague of Davis, assisted with *Tartuffe*, and another New Left figure, Frank Bardacke, collaborated on *The Miser*. Saul Landau wrote the scenario for a Commedia piece called *Chorizos* (1964) and provided lyrics for *Tartuffe*. Peter Berg worked on the adaptation of *Candelaio*. Although Berg, who joined the Troupe as an actor/adaptor in 1965, was not associated with the New Left *per se*, he had a good working knowledge of anarchist and situationist theory, and had been involved in civil rights activities in the South.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, each production involved some kind of collaboration with a script translator and/or adaptor, in line with the approach taken by Brecht in the Berliner Ensemble, where a writing/music/set design team would be used for each production, a team that was usually composed of non-actor specialists. In this sense a collaborative, rather than collectivist, approach was used, although some performers contributed directly to adaptations (e.g., Berg), and there were discussions and research activities amongst performers around a particular work. Davis, like Brecht, was unequivocally the leadership figure. Unlike Brecht, however, Davis routinely performed on stage alongside other group members. To this extent, as with the Living

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<sup>3</sup> Berg lived in Florida in the early 1960s although he was originally from New York.

Theatre, the Mime Troupe reflected a collectivist view of the division of labour, even if this did not extend to an ultrademocratic view of group roles and leadership.

While Commedia for the parks was established as a fixture in the annual plan for the Mime Troupe, indoor performances of more recent European works were presented, such as Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1963), which christened the Capp Street venue, and Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule* (1965). Furthermore, the Mime Troupe continued some of its self-written experimental and more esoteric activities, e.g., *Film: Plastic Haircut* (1963), *Mimes and Movie* (1964) and *Event III* (1964). The indoor activities usually took place at the group's Mission District venue, but from April 1964 it was decided that indoor events should be held at hired public halls rather than at a small private venue.

### Embedding the Mime Troupe in a locality

In September 1962, Davis, along with Elias Romero, a local light show artist, rented a disused church hall in the Mission District (3450 20<sup>th</sup> at Capp Street) as a rehearsal space/venue for \$85 per month. Davis lived in a back room for a time. The location, far from the legitimate theatre or entertainment district, was a deliberate choice for housing the Mime Troupe. The group wanted to be located in a non-bourgeois neighbourhood in order to serve, and relate to, a particular community. By January 1963 the relocation was complete, signalling the final breach with the Actors' Workshop.

As a part of this realignment, away from the theatre world towards the 'real world', in the summer of 1963, the name of the group was changed to San Francisco Mime Troupe. The name explicitly showed that the group now belonged to a collectivity or locality i.e., the city and the San Francisco Bay Area, rather than to an individual person or an abstract entity denoting only a style of theatre. The Troupe's Engagement, Commitment, and Fresh Air motto was also coined at this time (Davis, 1975c: 18).

In the spring of 1964, while the Mime Troupe was working on *Tartuffe*, the 'San Francisco New School', a free university co-ordinated by Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, was given use of the rented space in Capp Street church hall. The New School (West) paralleled the Free Speech Movement, which emerged in 1964 following protests and disciplinary actions at University of California, Berkeley. Davis, a board member of the New School, co-taught an art and politics course. The New School met at night and its 'staff', including Jim O'Connor, Doug Dowd, Stanley Weinstein, Robert Scheer, Todd Gitlin and others, had New Left or Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) associations. According to Doyle (1997: 59n) Davis encouraged Mime Troupe members to attend classes and looked for potential Troupe members amongst attendees. During the same year Davis and others negotiated unsuccessfully to buy the 2400-seat Palace Theatre (half-seriously envisaged as a 'People's Palace of the Arts'), opposite Washington Square, North Beach to house

both the Mime Troupe and the San Francisco New School. For Davis the connections to the New Left were an essential influence on Mime Troupe activities, helping to make *Tartuffe* the group's first work as a radical theatre. The play's adaptor, Richard Sassoon, worked closely with the original text but recast it at certain key points to sharpen the debate about just how much the civil rights movement had achieved in America.

In May 1965 the Mime Troupe staged Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule*. Davis had first read the play in 1961. It was performed in the style of a Japanese Noh play and was accompanied by a lecture from Robert Scheer entitled 'The U.S. in Vietnam, A Morality Talk'. In July the Mime Troupe moved its centre of operations to 924 Howard Street, another location in the working class area of the city. Davis conceded that the Capp Street church failed to draw those in the immediate neighbourhood indoors:

We had abandoned, after a six-month trial, the hope of bringing an audience to the Latin American ghetto in the Mission. We never had any Latinos come through the doors. Our relations with the community were more apparent at the Donut shop on the corner of 20<sup>th</sup> and Mission than on the stage in the abandoned church. (1975c: 43)

In December of the previous year the acting secretary for the Mime Troupe had sent correspondence to prospective sponsors of the new premises noting: 'The Theatre will seat approximately 200 people and we will have a restaurant kitchen capable of serving 50 people' (Davis Papers, Box 2, item 26). It is interesting to compare such community service aspirations with those of the Living Theatre in New York in the 1950s and early 1960s, which seem to be very similar. The Living Theatre stopped short of running soup kitchens, but it clearly saw a role for itself in terms of providing an arts centre for Greenwich urban villagers.

### **1965-67: Guerrilla Theatre, group growth, and Digger destabilisation**

As part of the move to Howard Street, the Mime Troupe provided the San Francisco regional branch of Students for a Democratic Society with office space. Davis himself was soon contributing occasional pieces to the SDS regional newsletter, and to other radical non-theatre publications.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of pamphleteering and propaganda, which Davis clearly regarded as important, the 'Guerrilla Theatre' essay, drafted by Davis in 1965, is of central importance. The term 'guerrilla theatre' was first coined by Peter Berg, although a publicity leaflet for the Mime Troupe's presentation of *Ubu Roi*, staged in December 1963, had announced that 'Theatre is guerilla war!' (Edelson, 1975: 91). Berg had joined the Mime Troupe in 1965 and seemed set to play a major role in the Mime Troupe's future, as dramaturg, actor and director. Listening to a discussion presented to the Mime Troupe by Davis in May 1965 on the necessary function of theatre in America, Berg saw in Davis's ideas a clear parallel with guerrilla warfare. 'Guerrilla Theatre' was published in *The Drama Review* in July 1966 and was part critique and part

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Davis (1964; 1966b).

manifesto. Interspersed with critical remarks concerning American involvement in Vietnam and the distracting gadgetry of consumer society, Davis implicates the current theatre in what Marx had identified as the central problem of civil society: 'Theatre has contributed to alienation by presenting a performer who is hemmed in from costume to head. He too is a number in a basket, a character 'type,' and he trains his 'instrument' to take orders.' (Davis, 1966a: 130).

Of greater interest is the articulation of Davis's ideal about the theatre group as a group:

The Guerrilla company must exemplify change as a group. The group formation – its cooperative relationships and corporate identity – must have a morality at its core. The corporate entity ordinarily has no morality. This must be the difference in a sea of savagery. There is to be no distinction between public behavior and private behavior. Do in public what you do in private, or stop doing it in private. (131)

Wording such as this would seem to apply quite easily, in principle, to a radical theatre such as the Living Theatre, which similarly espoused the exemplary role of theatre in modelling society or community, and denied any distinction between the theatrical frame and daily life, and also, some three years later, in *Paradise Now*, specifically labelled a part of the performance as 'The Rite of Guerrilla Theatre'.<sup>5</sup>

In keeping with Brecht's view of the role of theatre, Davis argues in his essay that guerrilla theatre needs to be redirected in order to 'teach', 'direct toward change', and 'be an example of change' (131). Again, this appears to be consonant with the Living Theatre credo, as do his remarks, under the heading of a 'Handbook for guerrilla theatre', about what type of space should be used: 'Find a low-rent space to be used for rehearsals and performances: loft, garage, abandoned church, or barn. If the director sleeps in, it's cheaper.' (131). Davis's suggestion here is redolent of typical Off-Off-Broadway options for performance venues in the early 1960s and is exactly what the Living Theatre did in its New York period of the 1950s.

Furthermore, Davis's policy on performer recruitment seems to be in harmony with that of the Living Theatre:

Start with people, not actors. Find performers who have something unique and exciting about them when they are on stage. For material use anything to fit the performers. Allow the performers to squeeze the material to their own shape. Liberate the larger personalities and spirits.

*Commedia dell'Arte* has been useful for this approach. It is an open and colorful form, uses masks, music, gags, and is easily set up with backdrop and platform. Presented inside, bright lights will do; outside there are no lighting problems. (131)

However, the differences between the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Living Theatre are greater than they might appear. Firstly, when Davis talks about eliminating the distinction between public and private behaviour and liberating larger personalities and spirits, he does not mean unrestrained self-expression and open experimentation. The performer has to find expression within structure (such as *Commedia*). Living

<sup>5</sup> See also Richard Schechner's 'Guerrilla (sic) Theatre: May 1970' (1970b). His discussion is more about what defines guerrilla theatre and particular scenarios rather than how to organise a guerrilla theatre group.

Theatre policy appears to have been much more *laissez-faire*. Individuals brought to the group their own interpretations of appropriate stage material. And when Davis talks of starting with ‘people, not actors’ he is not dispensing with principles of performer training, discipline and auditions. He is suggesting a broader definition of performance capabilities, but not ‘anything goes’, which a number of critics believed was exactly what the Living Theatre did sanction. Although a deceptively large number in the Living Theatre had theatre backgrounds, particularly the American members, persistence alone, the courtship of existing members, and shared political sympathies, could each be sufficient to gain admittance to the Living Theatre in the 1960s. On one occasion Beck, no doubt partly for provocative effect, talked about the role of sex in recruitment:

There is in the community a great deal of free sex and inter-community sex. There are many short-lived love affairs within the community: there are also peripheral or outside love affairs of a transient sort – when they become very steady or very close then the person usually comes into the community. There is a reasonable amount of multi-party sex – three four five six people . . . sex. There is a reasonable amount of male homosexuality and a smaller amount of female homosexuality. (Beck qtd. in Neville, 1970: 61)

Also, Living Theatre use of the term ‘guerrilla’ had to be understood in terms of its pacifist anarchism. Although the San Francisco Mime Troupe did not advocate violence, it was much closer to accepting the militaristic implications of the terminology. A guerrilla warfare unit could only succeed by having clearly defined roles and leadership. Decisions by consensus or throwing the I Ching are not accepted practice in a guerrilla unit.

In any case, members of the Living Theatre would probably have agreed with Davis’s pronouncement that ‘Guerrilla Theatre travels light and makes friends of the populace’ (Davis, 1966a: 132). The Living Theatre travelled light during its sojourns in Europe and America, carrying little by way of worldly goods, even though it was a large ensemble, numbering over 40 individuals. A subtle difference, however, lay in the way the Living Theatre made friends of the populace. The group rarely stayed long in one place, and although sympathetic to the disempowered and dispossessed in society, there was perhaps more of a sense that the Living Theatre had come to town to ‘perform’ an ideal alternative community, as if the goal was to make invitations to others join a new community rather than blend in with existing ones.

This is not to say that the San Francisco Mime Troupe did not display certain romantic tendencies. As Doyle (1997) points out, Mime Troupe rhetoric was symptomatic of Movement sentiment of the time:

In ‘Guerrilla Theater’ we can see the first stirrings of the Movement’s revolutionary dalliance. This fascination with the charismatic leaders, tactics, and ideologies of armed liberation in Latin America and South East Asia would soon help foster a curious notion. It became possible to believe, and then self-evident to antiwar and campus radicals, that they too were living under revolutionary conditions. Disastrously for those who embraced it, the idea turned out to be a wish, a hope, and a myth. (63)

Perhaps one of the reasons that this revolutionary romanticism was so vexatious and ultimately destructive for many groups in America was because, unlike other countries at the time, there was, as I have suggested in Chapter Two, more underlying hostility to the group as an idea. There was more concern with the threat to individualism, and more hostility to strong leadership by an individual on the grounds that it must be a conspiracy to wield power. This hostility, perhaps ironically, did not necessarily extend to the way in which groups in other countries were viewed. In Latin America and South East Asia, for example, groups could legitimately thrive with leaders, and leadership, in the form of Ché Guevara and Ho Chi Min, was perfectly intelligible and correct for Americans observing at a distance. By contrast, in America, for many Americans it seems, groups, whilst attractive because of the promise of *communitas*, also carried an inherent threat of eventual fascistic control. It was as if joining a commune inevitably meant ending up in a Manson Family situation.

That revolutionary zeal was developing apace in the Mime Troupe is evident in Davis's second essay on guerrilla theatre (often referred to as 'Guerrilla theatre 1967' to distinguish it from the first) which was published in Boston's *Avatar* in February 1968. In it Davis states the following:

My own theatrical premise:

WESTERN SOCIETY IS ROTTEN IN GENERAL, CAPITALIST SOCIETY IN THE MAIN,  
AND U.S. SOCIETY IN THE PARTICULAR.

The basis of the disease is private property: it puts the value on all things in terms of money and possessions and splits man's personality into fragmented specialties, thus making him useless on the dance floor yet well equipped to run an IBM 1324. The idea of community so necessary to a healthy individual is hemmed in by the picket fences surrounding each patch of earth and the concept of total man has been sutured by idiotic efficient specialization. (This is a simplification of the condition; for further information read: Marx, Freud, Norman O. Brown, H. Marcuse, Regis Debray, C. Guevara, Sun Tzu, Mao Tsetung, Thorsten Veblen, Carl Oglesby, Gary Snyder, etc.) (1968b: 9)

His recommended reading is interesting insofar as it epitomises standard countercultural tastes of the time. Yet, unlike many other radical theatres, the Mime Troupe was not explicitly concerned with psychological theory and the psychology of the individual. The Living Theatre actively consulted with R.D. Laing and Paul Goodman, and introduced Freud and Wilhelm Reich into its adaptation of *Frankenstein* (1965). Nor did the Mime Troupe incorporate psychotherapy or group therapy into performance. The Performance Group made it a central aspect of *Dionysus in 69* (1968). Nevertheless, even Davis seems to have imbibed and endorsed the type of material about society's inherent threats to the individual psyche (Freud, Brown, Marcuse) that provided so much fuel for groups like the Living Theatre and the Performance Group. In June 1966 the Mime Troupe supported LSD evangelist Timothy Leary's legal defence in a 'Teach-on LSD Benefit'.

Furthermore, Doyle notes that even Davis had intimations of the 'withering away of the director' in radical theatre:

In his 1968 essay 'Cultural Revolution,' R.G. Davis tacitly embraced the New Left's concept of participatory democracy and thereby effectively wrote himself out of the script as director of the San Francisco Mime Troupe. 'Individualism,' he said then, 'precludes the formation of revolutionary action which is essentially communal.' (1997: 88)

Doyle also identifies the essential contradiction in the use of the guerrilla metaphor given what occurred later within the Mime Troupe:

Equalized power relations among members of the Mime Troupe could not be squared with the organizational framework of a guerrilla cadre. The latter, after all, functioned as a strict hierarchy under the command of a single ranking officer. (89)

Davis was clearly ambivalent about leadership by the late 1960s. Indeed, orthodox accounts of the Mime Troupe's history notwithstanding, the withering away of the director seems to have taken place over a long period of time and was probably less a *coup* than an abdication.

#### Group growth: *The Minstrel Show* and countercultural kudos

This process of unravelling of the group's structure seems as much a matter of circumstance as it was ideological evolution. To some extent the Mime Troupe became a victim of its own success. *The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* (1965) seems to have played a key role in raising the profile of the Mime Troupe. Davis had been looking for material to highlight what he and others saw as some of the contradictions in the civil rights situation in America at the time (i.e., persisting stereotypes, inter-racial tensions, and black elitism). He had briefly considered staging Genet's *The Blacks*, but found that he could not get the performing rights from New York, nor could he sufficiently interest actors from the black community in the project. The idea for a self-written production was 'nurtured by finding out that minstrel shows were a part of our cultural heritage from 1830 to 1920 and, at its peak, there were three hundred floating companies, from town to city...' (Davis, 1975c: 49).

The production was rehearsed for nine months and key script and staging inputs came from Mime Troupe members John Broderick and Jason Marc Alexander. Saul Landau, a previous collaborator on *Chorizos* and *Tartuffe*, wrote the 'Nego (sic) History Week'. Minimalist composer Steve Reich provided original music. It was a collaborative pretext to the extent that there was teamwork on the script, even though Davis and Landau were the principal writers. (See Figure 5.1 Stage action in *The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* on page 156)

It was the first of the Mime Troupe's works to be thoroughly previewed in front of, and effectively vetted by, selected audiences such as Campaign on Racial Equality (CORE) and Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) groups and local neighbourhood inhabitants, before being taken on tour. It was also the first production by the Mime Troupe to involve non-white actors - three white actors, three

black actors, and a white Interlocutor. Because all except the Interlocutor wore blackface and the performers kept trading stereotyped jokes and racial puns from both white and black perspectives, the audience had to guess which of the actors really were African American. This was a source of confusion and irritation for the audience according to Davis (1975: 57). In this respect the philosophy of actor anonymity, up to this point reinforced by the use of Commedia mask and costume, was maintained. The ensemble approach came first. However, in contrast to the established pattern with the Mime Troupe's major works, *The Minstrel Show* was designed principally as an indoor production, lending it a more intense air.

Figure 5.1 Stage action in *The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel*

*The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* (1965)

*The Minstrel Show* begins with a warm-up; a tambourine banging stomping cakewalk with banjo music to get 'things swinging'. Then the 'Interlocutor' (the stern straight white man) comes in and begins some 'cross-fire' corn-ball gags with a minstrel (this was a cornerstone of traditional minstrel shows). Gags are exchanged, some lifted straight from earlier actual minstrel shows, others reflecting contemporary national politics. This is followed by a 'Stump Speech on Evolution,' then a song, 'Old Black Joe'. The singing is subverted by a renegade minstrel who will not bow his head and who simulates masturbation. Upset, the Interlocutor at this point lapses into Spanish (and tears) and is led off by a sympathetic minstrel. A mock Nazi fugue by the minstrels follows before a launch by one of the minstrels into 'Nego [sic] History', which depicts various moments from the War for Independence through to black troops in Vietnam. The Minstrels then become uppity and 'militant'. The Interlocutor tries to restore order by suggesting a 'chick/stud' scene. This involves a black man picking up a white woman and taking her to bed. There are overtones of violence as the black man symbolically strangles an imagined throat beneath the mask worn by the woman, who has offered him both her mask and her dress. The chick fades from the scene and the stud is chased off stage by other laughing minstrels. A short film follows, 'Oh, Dem Watermelons' (made by Robert Nelson) about the life and death of a watermelon. The minstrels then whoop it up with the audience via a Black Muslim song set to a rumba rhythm. This ends the first half (there is no real intermission). The second half is comprised of two playlets. The first is a 'cop/kid' scene (based on an actual incident in Harlem where a black youth was killed by a police officer, triggering a riot). The second playlet is a three-way men's bathroom scene between negro, 'nigger' and white. After a few verbal exchanges the nigger pulls a knife but is uncertain as to whom he most wants to stab, the white, or 'Mr. Ass Kisser'.

Summarised from Davis (1975c: 56-63)

Although humorous in many places, *The Minstrel Show* is in effect a critique of the Civil Rights Movement, challenging the supposed change in underlying attitudes and questioning whether there had in fact been material progress in black social status and living standards. After a successful debut in mid-1965, and a brief season in San Francisco at the start of 1966, *The Minstrel Show* was taken on three separate tours over the course of the next twelve months. For many, it was the first opportunity to see the Mime Troupe out of the Bay Area, as out-of-town shows had generally been one-off engagements until this point. In general, the Mime Troupe was very well received on the East Coast. It was closed down in Denver and Calgary and censored in other college towns. Obscenity charges were laid in Denver, and three members were arrested for possession of marijuana whilst on tour. Such incidents, and the fact that *The Minstrel Show* dealt with the immediate cultural and political context, established a reputation for the Mime Troupe on the East Coast as a high profile American radical political theatre, inviting comparisons with the street-oriented Bread and Puppet Theatre.



Shortly after *The Minstrel Show* debuted, the Mime Troupe's popularity and notoriety in the Bay Area was greatly enhanced by publicity surrounding Davis's arrest on August 7, 1965, in Lafayette Park for attempting to perform a new Commedia, Giordano Bruno's *Il Candelaio* (1965), adapted by Peter Berg. Davis was arrested for 'playing in the parks without a permit' shortly after he introduced the performance: 'Signor, Signora, Signorini . . . Il Troupo di Mimo di San Francisco presents for your enjoyment this afternoon . . . AN ARREST!!!!' (Davis, 1975c: 67). Up until 1965 the Mime Troupe had applied for and received permits without great difficulty (although typically they had to know how to cultivate friendly commissioners for each performance). However, when some of the material began to refer to issues such as Vietnam or rioting in American cities and the commissioners insisted on previewing and pre-approving the works it became evident that permits would be withheld or revoked.

The Lafayette Park 'bust' was more or less provoked by Davis. Members of the American Civil Liberties Union were in attendance on the day of the arrest. The arrest, conviction and sentencing of Davis - 30 days suspended sentence, one year probation, and the loss of the Mime Troupe's recently awarded \$1,000 City Hotel Tax grant - plus the attempted banning of the Mime Troupe from public performances, prompted the group to seek fighting funds direct from the public (despite the verdict, the Troupe was not further prevented from performing in city parks). The Mime Troupe also sought to generate positive publicity for its activities.

As it happened, a business manager named Bill Graham had been engaged earlier in 1965. Graham had shown himself to be more than competent at the relatively modest task of helping the company to stage free low-cost public shows. When it came to staging larger scale fundraising events Graham was ideal. He orchestrated three benefits for the Mime Troupe (Appeal I, II, III) between November 1965 and January 1966 at the Fillmore Auditorium. These were essentially rock concerts. They included early incarnations of the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane (the latter rehearsed in the Mime Troupe studios), and bands such as the Mothers of Invention (and later Quicksilver Messenger Service and Moby Grape in an Appeal IV one-off). In other words, the cream of the West Coast psychedelic music community was easily harnessed to support the Mime Troupe. The concerts were in fact the forerunners of the million-dollar Fillmore concerts (West Coast at first and later East Coast) for which Graham is most often remembered (he also managed many of the above or similar bands), and which made him extremely wealthy. Ironically, Graham's overwhelming success at organising these events effectively cost him his manager's job, as the Mime Troupe's main aim was to make performances, not profits.

Graham's dismissal as manager reinforces the notion that the Mime Troupe was firmly anti-capitalist. A visitor, writing in the early 1970s, remarked:

An interesting note concerning finances: In the early days, the Mime Troupe had relationships with most of the so-called revolutionary San Francisco [rock] groups: the Jefferson Airplane, the

Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and so on. All that has been dissolved now, mostly, I gather, because the Mime Troupe wants it that way. (Weisman, 1973: 119)

In 1966, however, on the eve of the so-called 'Summer of Love' in Haight-Ashbury, the Mime Troupe was situated at the epicentre of countercultural events. As Peter Coyote, erstwhile Mime Trouper and San Francisco Digger, later commented: 'The Mime Troupe was the cultural expression of a coalition of Lefties, folkies, hippies, radicals, disaffected people. And we were its theater' (Coyote qtd. in Doyle, 1997: 51). Many of the trademark, hard-to-read, psychedelic posters of the high period of Haight-Ashbury, advertising underground rock concerts, also list the Troupe on the evening bill, either as participants, or as beneficiaries.

One of the difficulties with such a position was that because so many people were beginning to attach themselves to, or wanted to be affiliated with, the Mime Troupe, the organisation became unwieldy. Coyote gives some insight as to its composition:

The diverse demographics of troupe members, perhaps twenty people at the core of a larger, loose community, included dockworkers, college students, socialist organizers, market analysts, musicians, opera singers, vegetarians, drug addicts, ballet dancers, criminals, and bona fide eccentrics. (1998: 17)

By 1966 membership exceeded 50, yet an average show only required up to ten performers. One solution was to diversify activities, either by creating performing sub-units or by launching alternative local organisations. Guerrilla theatre actions were a partial answer in terms of new sub-units. Children's theatre pieces were created, such as Barbara LaMorticella's *What's That a Head?* (1966). Small touring units were created which could take a major work, such as *The Minstrel Show*, to other cities while members of the Mime Troupe worked on new material or involved themselves in other events in the Bay Area. The Mime Troupe also seems to have offered its services for major countercultural events. Few of the parades, protests, and celebrations that took place in Haight-Ashbury, as the Summer of Love developed over the latter part of 1966 and early months of 1967, passed without Mime Troupe musical and/or costumed accompaniment.

On the organisational front, in May 1966 an 'Artist's Protective Association' inaugural meeting was held at the Mime Troupe's Howard Street loft. This new group became the 'Artists Liberation Front' after another meeting in June 13. There were approximately 85 attendees at the first meeting, including many Mime Troupe members. The meetings were prompted both by the Mime Troupe's exclusion from city arts funding decision-making processes in April, and by an explicit rejection of a Mime Troupe funding bid. One initiative was a 'Haight-Ashbury Settlement House', the term connoting the 1920s and 30s when orientation facilities in big cities were often set up by community groups in order to help new arrivals deal with the difficulties of getting started (Doyle, 1997: 85).

The San Francisco Mime Troupe was in danger of becoming all things to all people. Chronicler of the Haight-Ashbury scene, Charles Perry lists the group's activities in early 1966:

Since Bill Graham had left in February the Mime Troupe had mounted a children's puppet show, taken the anti-racist *Minstrel Show* on the road, presented a group of sketches satirically called *Traps Festival* for a radical's campaign (Robert Scheer) for mayor of Berkeley and participated in a benefit for Timothy Leary's legal fund. The giant puppets used in their political skits had continued to show up here and there; for instance, on the trucks the Vietnam Day Committee sent around Berkeley with a rock band in July.

The Mime Troupe's founder, R.G. Davis, had moved his opposition to foundation support from the level of personal example to organized resistance by forming an Artist's Liberation Front (ALF) to circumvent official art presentations, such as those of the San Francisco Cultural Board. A third of the forty-five ALF members were Mime Troupers... (1985: 81-82)

In some respects Davis and others seem to have been emulating American radical theatre groups of earlier decades. The San Francisco Mime Troupe was reminiscent of the Worker's Laboratory Theatre 1930-36, which at various times housed a Shock Troupe, an Evening Troupe, an Agit-Prop Section, a Puppet Group, and a Workers' Theatre School. It too saw itself as much as an emancipatory and educational force in the community as a theatre that staged political plays (see Jones, 1971).

However, as a number of commentators have observed, the combination of New Left thought and countercultural impulses in the 1960s, makes it difficult to draw straight analogies with earlier decades. Davis said of the Mime Troupe 'the cross-currents of art and political activity appeared to join. We had neither a tight program from the new left, nor a new direction for art' (1975c: 26). More problematically, the 1960s were characterised by a thoroughgoing radical egalitarianism which resisted the creation of new institutions with defined structures.

#### Destabilisation: The San Francisco Diggers as a theatrical outgrowth of the Mime Troupe

The first major wave of ultrademocracy hit the San Francisco Mime Troupe in late 1966 in the form of the San Francisco Diggers, although there had been internal disputes within the Mime Troupe in the past:

Davis had always encouraged serious political discussion – such as 'rap sessions' about Mao Tse-tung's book of quotations – so open factionalism was nothing new. But the most recent was a particularly deep rift; a group referring to themselves as Diggers after a seventeenth-century English sect of religious communists were in effect advocating throwing all the Mime Troupe's energies into the Haight-Ashbury community as the place of greatest revolutionary potential. (Perry, 1985: 82)

In fact, the Diggers drew on more than anarchist folk history for their *raison d'être*. (Gerrard Winstanley's Diggers maintained a year-long food growing protest on St. George's Hill, Surrey in 1649 in defiance of tax and property laws) Popular accounts, notably the autobiographies of Peter Coyote (1998) and Emmett Grogan (1972), attribute the formation of the Diggers to the arrival in San Francisco of both Grogan and

Billy Murcott, another person who joined the Mime Troupe in 1966, from New York. What seems more likely is that Coyote (who joined the Mime Troupe in 1965), Grogan and Murcott arrived at a time when the emergence of another group within the Mime Troupe was already underway. If there was a central theorist at all in the Diggers, it was in all likelihood Peter Berg, who had joined the Mime Troupe in 1965. Doyle suggests that 'Berg's theory of guerrilla theater, as distinguished from Davis's, was already well formed a half-year prior to the organisation of the Diggers, and it also predated Grogan's arrival on the scene' (1997: 183, fn.171). At least one founding Digger, Judy Goldhaft (formerly Rosenberg), was a Mime Troupe veteran, having joined in 1962. Berg, in particular, seems to have taken inspiration from Situationist and anarchist theory:

Of the dozen initial protagonists of the Diggers, probably only myself had anything like a radical political historical sense. The other people weren't radical, political traditionalists, which is what attracted me to what we were doing. That's what pulled me into it – that people were accomplishing what radical traditionalists might want to accomplish without even knowing the background. So I was sort of a resource for that sort of stuff. I was the only one who had read Kropotkin, OK? Or the Situationiste material thoroughly. (Berg qtd. in Lee and Noble, 1982: pp. 1-2)

Berg is quick to add that many of the Diggers were 'red diaper babies' (i.e., children of socialist parents), a point similarly made about the Mime Troupe by latter-day leader Joan Holden when interviewed in the late 1980s (Kessler, 1990: 206).

The first obvious signs of Digger insurrection came in the form of leaflets or broadsheets run off in the Mime Troupe studios on the mimeograph equipment belonging to the local branch of Students for a Democratic Society. On September 30, 1966, a manifesto calling for the reorganisation of the Mime Troupe was posted at the Howard Street studios. On December 3, 1966, perhaps in direct response to insurrection stirred by the Diggers weeks earlier, Davis drafted a letter to all in the cast of *The Condemned*. It was either a call to arms or a warning of imminent dismissal, depending upon interpretation. In response to a hypothetical question 'What do you feel responsible for?' Davis replies:

For those who wish to take on this responsibility they can consider themselves members of the Mime Troupe. For those that cannot, or will not then they must consider themselves friends not members of the Troupe.

The Troupe will always be a patriarchal enterprise 'a one man show' until others, enough to make up more than one show at a time, take on the responsibility of the theatre, the Mime Troupe and art. (Davis Papers, Rehearsal notebook for *The Condemned* - 6.177)

Beyond this, there does not appear to be any record of a showdown over the Mime Troupe's structure at this point. It was the Diggers who moved out. As Doyle puts it:

In the fall of 1966, Berg, Emmett Grogan, Peter Coyote, Judy Goldhaft, and a number of other Mime Troupe members - some twenty in all - broke away from the company to found a free-wheeling anarchist collective they called the Diggers. (1997: 71)<sup>6</sup>

The process of defection seems to have been a little more gradual than this statement suggests. Coyote, for example, went on tour with the Mime Troupe in 1967 to present a new work, *L'Amant Militaire* (1967). Digger support for the Mime Troupe did not immediately cease. There was, at first, co-membership. For example, Mime Troupe members and Diggers participated alongside one another in one of the most celebrated events of the Summer of Love, and indeed the entire Hippie era, the 'Death of Money and Birth of the Haight' parade in December 16, 1966. It was conceived and written by Berg. Perry describes it as follows:

It started at 5:00 p.m. with most of the Mime Troupe silently passing out various paraphernalia on the street: pennywhistles, automobile rearview mirrors, flowers, lollipops, incense, candles, bags of grass (lawn clippings) and signs reading 'Now!' Three hooded figures carried a silver dollar sign on a stick. A black-clad modern Diogenes carrying a kerosene lamp preceded a black-draped coffin borne by six pallbearers wearing Egyptianesque animal masks. Other Mime Troupe members, including the Gargoyle Singers - who had recently been arrested for 'begging' while singing Christmas carols outside a North Beach topless nightclub, all made up like cripples and dwarves from the Middle Ages - walked down the sidewalk in two groups on either side of the street, chanting 'oooh,' 'aaah,' 'sssh' or 'be cool' as people tootled on the pennywhistles.

Over a thousand people had come for the parade, of which the Diggers had promised, 'We will continue until the Diggers feel it beautiful to stop'. (1985: 114-15)

This type of dramaturgy, most of it scripted by Berg, characterised Digger theatre over the next two years. It is worth noting at this point that Coyote sees Berg and Davis essentially as rivals. Reflecting on Berg's preoccupation with the concept of 'life-acting' he states:

Unfortunately for the Mime Troupe, pursuit of this subject carried Berg out of the troupe and directly into a loose confederation of friends called the Diggers. It would have happened anyway eventually. Both Ronnie and Peter were brilliant, angry, committed guys, and both tended towards autonomous behavior. The troupe was too small for such replication. (1998: 34)

Although not without comic content, Digger theatre had a direct action focus, such as reclaiming the city streets for pedestrians, as in the 'Full Moon Public Celebration of Halloween' at the intersection of Haight and Ashbury on October 31, 1966. A tall, wooden 'Free Frame of Reference', which the Diggers had been using at the Panhandle Free Food gatherings initiated a few weeks earlier, was a centre-piece to the action. Two giant puppets, borrowed from the San Francisco Mime Troupe, performed a piece called 'Any Fool on the Street', written and directed by Berg. The puppets moved back and forth through the Frame and encouraged those in attendance to do the same well, thereby changing, or freeing, their frame of reference. Approximately 75 smaller versions of the Frame made out of yellow-painted laths six inches square were distributed as neck pendants.

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<sup>6</sup> People with San Francisco Mime Troupe affiliations who were also Diggers were Peter Berg, Lynn Brown, Brooks Butcher, Peter Cohon (Coyote), Judy Goldhaft, Emmett Grogan, Jane Lapiner, Robert La Mortidella, Kent Minault, Billy Murcott, Judi Quick, and David Simpson.

This was followed by the 'Intersection Game'. People were instructed to cross the intersection in a way that traced as many different kinds of polygons as possible, creating a kind of anti-automobile 'sit-in'. At least 500 people took part and police arrested five Mime Troupe-Diggers. It was a comic coup. The arresting police officer found himself arguing with, and arresting, the eight-foot tall puppets in a street theatre scene very much in keeping with the Commedia dell'Arte style being used by the Mime Troupe at the time. The subsequent acquittal (November 27) of those arrested propelled the Diggers into the media spotlight, although, in keeping with an ultrademocratic philosophy, they tried not to give real names in interviews (many gave 'Free' as their name), or all used the name of one member as their own, notably Emmett Grogan. Alternatively, names of American anarchists or lone bombers, such as Emma Goldman and George Metevsky, were given.

Apart from free food in the parks, the Diggers also ran stores such as the Free Frame of Reference Store, and later the Trip Without A Ticket. These were in essence goodwill shops where you paid for an item whatever you thought it was worth, or you brought in something for exchange. There were no staff as such. The idea was that people took on whatever roles they wanted. If you wanted to be the proprietor that was fine. The shopper was permitted and encouraged both to be a 'life-actor', and, in one of Berg's other favourite turns of phrase, 'to create the condition you describe'. Much Digger time was spent, if the accounts are correct, in doing Digger good works, writing tracts, and attempting to help people to get by in a practical sense. They advocated free food, free health treatment, and other services, and indeed this prompted several initiatives by residents in the Haight and other neighbourhoods.

Berg's dramaturgy represented one of the main strands of anarchist thinking in the Diggers. There was a clearly a belief in breaking the theatrical and social frame in order to create a 'life-actor':

If the glass is cut, if the cushioned distance of media is removed, the patients may never respond as normals again. They will become life-actors.

*Theater is territory.* A space for existing outside padded walls. Setting down a stage declares a universal pardon for imagination. But what happens next must mean more than sanctuary or preserve. How would real wardens react to life-actors on liberated ground? How can the intrinsic freedom of theater illuminate walls and show the weak-spots where a breakout could occur.

*Guerrilla theatre intends to bring audiences to liberated territory to create life-actors.* (Berg, 1968: 3)

Despite the metaphor of the psychiatric patient, and unlike other frame-breaking efforts as in, say, the Living Theatre and the Performance Group, this did not entail deep psychological revelation, or 'acting out', as it is known in therapeutic parlance. A person was free to change roles and select roles, but not necessarily to erase them entirely. In this sense Berg's dramaturgy was a social dramaturgy, and the theatrical events were first and foremost exchanges within the social domain (a street or shop) rather than invitations to the assertion of a putative authentic self through trance and primal scream (*Paradise Now* [1968]) or group therapy (*Dionysus in 69* [1968]).

This being said, there seems to have been a countercurrent within the Diggers that laid more stress on the sanctity of the individual, and this was perhaps best embodied in the actions and views of Emmett Grogan. Grogan was in effect the main advocate, ambassador, and, arguably, assassin, of the Digger ethos. Writing in the third person in his literary autobiography, *Ringolevio: A Life Played For Keeps*, he gives his impression of the San Francisco Mime Troupe in 1966:

They were a radical company who had developed their theater arts into a medium for revealing the lies on which the U.S. Government based most of its foreign and domestic policies. Since Kenny's (Grogan's name for his youthful self) political awareness had grown into a need for action, he wanted to become a part of that. He knew, however, that most radical groups had a built-in, self-destructive energy that was dangerous not only to their ability to perform, but to the individual as well. (1972: 232)

Grogan's last remark, echoing Bion's assertions about the vicissitudes of group life for the individual, seems to epitomise the group idea in America in the 1960s. Indeed, according to one source it was Grogan, under the pseudonym of George Metevsky, who introduced the 'Do your (own) thing' catchphrase into the American countercultural lexicon in November 1966 (Doyle, 1997: 106). He was by all accounts an inspired individualist rather than a team player (Coyote 1998), and although his suspicion of radical groups may not have been shared by many other members of the Diggers, he signified what Berg has described as an individualist radicalism. Noting the impact on Digger thought of the Dutch Provos,<sup>7</sup> an anarchist group that attracted media attention through several Situationist-like surprise actions in Amsterdam in 1965, Berg reflects:

But the Provos in Amsterdam had a very strange influence in that for example if you read the book *I, Jan Cremer* – Jan Cremer is an individualist radical. He's a self celebrating egocentric maniac and most of *I, Jan Cremer* is not believable. But he was one of the figures in the Provos. He probably made up most of the book. But it has this individualist radicalism about it. If there was a living character like the individual Jan Cremer that Jan Cremer describes, it was probably Emmett Grogan, who had a similar background. [...] So Emmett, who had no political background – disliked the Left – 'creep communist' would be something Emmett might say, very easily. [...] To be as individualist as Jan Cremer was is very radical in Europe, even now. Europeans are not as individualistically inclined. If you went to Denmark, and you looked like you were ill in the street, fifty people would stop to help you immediately. Danes are very communalist. Even ..., in the countryside. Even the English are. But Americans are not, as a rule. (qtd. in Lee and Noble, 1982: 2-3)

Ironically, when Digger influence quickly spread to other parts of the country, particularly, the East Coast, it was the arch-individualist Grogan, originally a New Yorker, who delivered one of the most insightful evaluations on the prospect for countercultural community-building in New York *vis-à-vis* San Francisco in the mid-1960s. Reflecting on a 'hip community' meeting on the Lower East Side he noted:

Most of the thirty-some odd persons present at the meet were in their twenties, had been raised in upper-middle-class environments, had finished college and had dropped out of their establishment futures because they were bored and wanted a chance to put creativity back into their lives, to

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting that one of the key figures associated with the Provos, Simon Vinkenoog, had been an enthusiastic participant in the Living Theatre's anarchic debut of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* in 1964. In an oblique way the Living Theatre may have destabilised the Mime Troupe.

make an art out of living. They were more wordy and less spaced out than their San Francisco peers, and since the Lower East Side didn't exactly border any spectacular woodland or rolling green hills, they were more concerned with community politics than with the ecology of their environment. (Grogan, 1972: 321)

Grogan's appraisal reinforces Banes' observations, in *Greenwich Village 1963* (1993), concerning the avant-garde scene in New York in the early 1960s and the 'search for community'. Younger artists were typically running away from small town communities in the American heartland to fabricate a liminal, but usually ephemeral, sense of community in New York. For Grogan, the separation from nature in New York was a serious limitation:

It was only after Emmett had acquainted himself with the various action projects on the Lower East Side that he realized there was really no feeling of community among the hip artists, and no sense of real belonging to the neighborhood. They were more involved in protesting national issues like the war in Vietnam, than in getting their own streets cleaned of filth and made livable. In fact, they seemed to dig living in a slum and like the smelly garbage strewn all over the place. It gave it a romantic look, one of the members of the Angry Arts commented. (332)

It is interesting to contrast this claim with the Living Theatre's pattern of movements in the 1950s and 60s. After struggling to establish a theatre-cum-centre for the arts in New York, which it had done with some success by 1963, it summarily fled New York, ostensibly in search of a more welcoming community. Yet instead of attempting to embed itself deeply in one location it chose to make its community nomadic, often ignoring local custom and practice along the way.

In the case of both the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Diggers, whatever their ideological differences might have been, there was a prior commitment to a constituting and legitimating community. Both groups also eschewed star acting as a matter of principle (as did the Living Theatre and the Performance Group). The Mime Troupe used masks while the Diggers used pseudonyms. There was also a sense that the surrounding environment mattered, and not just in an aesthetic sense. While the Mime Troupe insisted on fresh air and open space for its performance space as something to give common ground to performer and audience experience, the Diggers built their actions around seasonal events and celebrations. Almost every significant piece of Digger theatre had a pagan or religious calendar event as a point of reference.<sup>8</sup> Their name signified a connection with the Earth and with place. Digging meant enjoyment, but it also implied digging in to find a cultural, social, and political substrate.

Yet, ironically, given the Diggers' destabilising effect upon the Mime Troupe, the Diggers seem themselves to have had an unstable centre. On the one hand the group was an urban communalist enterprise *par excellence*, working closely with community groups, and in this sense it was not far removed from the philosophy of the Mime Troupe. The difference was that the Diggers aligned themselves more with the communitas-seeking counterculture whereas the Mime Troupe, at least in Davis's view, was more New Left-aligned. However, the Digger 'philosophy of free', which was never meant to be equated with

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<sup>8</sup>Doyle (1997: 275-87) stresses the underlying religiousness of the Diggers.



unbridled hedonism, when disconnected from place, risked being nothing more than an excuse for self-indulgence, and it could be easily co-opted, as the 'Yippie' phenomenon suggests.

The Yippies owed their genesis to the Diggers' torpedoing of the SDS 'Back to the Drawing Boards' convention at a camp in Denton, Michigan in June 1967. Having read the Port Huron Statement (1962), and after being invited by SDS staff Bob O'Keene and Keith Lampe, Berg led a small Digger group across country to the convention, which was more an unofficial 'old guard' regrouping exercise than a convention, according to key SDS member Todd Gitlin (1989: 225). In describing the highly theatrical performances of Berg, who was the main speaker, more accurately provocateur, and Grogan, Gitlin attributes the dissolution of SDS to the ideological blows dealt to representatives by the Diggers at this convention (1989: 222-30). Gitlin also notes that present at the meeting were Paul Krassner and Abbie Hoffman, who, highly impressed by the Diggers, parlayed their tactics into the Yippie campaign of public acts and publications (from which the Diggers were very quick to distance themselves):

Abbie's story is that he stumbled into the spotlight. In August, two months after Drawing Boards, he led a group to drop dollar bills on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, watching the brokers scramble for them and the ticker tape stop dead, then burning bills for the hordes of reporters as they asked their uncomprehending questions. It wasn't original: the Diggers burned money first, at a demonstration outside the druggy-spiritualist paper *East Village Other*. (1989: 233)

He also notes that the other well-known architect of the Yippies, Jerry Rubin, was impressed by the theatrical approach of the Diggers' parent body: 'With the counsel of Ronnie Davis, the founder of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Jerry Rubin had already discovered the theatrical values of costuming' (233).

Vanguard parties of Diggers headed west to Chicago and New York. Grogan played a key role in the New York detachment. Free stores and street-cleaning actions were staged to shame the city into providing better services. Goldstein (1989), McNeill (1970), Sukenick (1987) and others have commented in depth on the impact of the Diggers on the counterculture, and the proliferation of Digger enclaves in New York and elsewhere (Julian Beck and Judith Malina's son, Garrick Beck, became a Digger in Portland, Oregon, at one point in the late 1960s). Digger enclaves seemed to be springing up everywhere.

Indeed, Unger and Unger, in their commentary on the 1960s, regard both the Mime Troupe and the Diggers as signal institutions for the counterculture. Referring to Davis's first guerrilla theatre essay of 1965 they note:

That May, Davis presented a manifesto to his colleagues aligning the Mime Troupe with SNCC, CORE, and SDS. (Peter) Berg called the approach 'guerrilla theater,' and the term was soon adopted by a rash of small and ephemeral street-theater groups that appeared in college towns and metropolitan centers around the country performing skits attacking racism, the Vietnam War, and the establishment. But Davis committed the Mime Troupe to more than leftist agitprop. Its members would also, he stated, 'exemplify the message that we asked others to accept' by living without the sexual, material, and psychological hang-ups of the bourgeoisie. Out of this rich compost of left politics-cum-pot, LSD, and free love would shortly spring the Diggers, a ragtag of

street activists and cultural anarchists who would set the tone for the counterculture capital, Haight-Ashbury. (1988: 397-98)

The glibness of these remarks notwithstanding, they reflect the level of impact that the Mime Troupe and the Diggers had as leaders, not followers, of countercultural trends.

Yet by late 1968/early 1969 the San Francisco Diggers had more or less disbanded. In the end, the more hedonistic external misrepresentations of Digger anarchism, internal individualist opportunism, the logistics of free food in an overrun Haight-Ashbury and the attractions of the countercultural lifestyle seem to have enervated many Diggers to the extent that they, Berg, Goldhaft, Coyote, and a number of other former Mime Troupers included, literally headed for the hills in the latter part of 1968 to travel and experiment with rural communal living.<sup>9</sup> In a sense, the experimentation with rural communal living was part of the general 'leave the city' ethos that swept most major American conurbations in 1968-69. Many Diggers gravitated to sparsely populated parts of Northern California and New Mexico. A number remained there through subsequent decades, becoming involved in ecological issues and community theatre.

In another sense, the move back to the land was consistent with the philosophy of the original English Diggers of the 17th century. Thus, in contrast to the Performance Group, which interrogated on stage the communal impetus in American history in *Commune* (1970-71), explicitly referring to Brook Farm as a point of reference, many ex-Mime Troupers and Diggers left the stage, more or less permanently, to reconnect with this historical tradition.

#### Temporary restabilisation: reorganisation and reduction of the Mime Troupe

The Digger phenomenon affected the San Francisco Mime Troupe to the extent that it stripped the latter of a number of talented members. The event was significant insofar as it foreshadowed the more serious fragmentation and factionalism that was to take place in 1969. By that time there were the 'hard-liners', usually referred to as 'Maoists', who sought strong direction (with or without leadership by a single individual), and there were those with less doctrinaire and more egalitarian principles. The Diggers, in late 1966, were the latter. Rather than fight within the Mime Troupe the Diggers broke away completely to further a leaderless movement.

In Spring 1967, the Mime Troupe needed to regroup. Davis was forced to consider the status of the Troupe overall:

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<sup>9</sup> The details of these ventures comprise much of Coyote's autobiography *Sleeping Where I Fall* (1998).

We had come off the high days of the 1965 arrest with a notable public accomplishment and believed ourselves to be the political artistic voice of the community. To carry through our community work we started an organization called the Artists Liberation Front. [...] We had no handle on any rational means of survival. [...] Our park shows were just eking by and we were just developing new material for a cabaret theatre circuit. Our doors had opened wide to all comers, yet there was no centralized organizational means to handle the many people who came. Our classes in dance, acting and such made less and less sense to people who were attracted to the democratic notion of amateuristic total participation of 'do your own thing'. [...] In order to find out where people were at, I had conversations with groups of five over coffee and asked what each person in the company thought our direction should be. The majority were interested in a commune/theatrical/action troupe. Many wanted to buy or rent a house and live together. I couldn't believe that our problems could be answered by moving in with each other but others had one ear and one foot on Haight Street and that was the message. What were we supposed to do with those fifty people out there in the big loft? (1975c: 80-81)

Davis's response was to send a letter out radically pruning the Troupe from 59 to 14 full-time members on May 1 (echoing his 'friends' versus 'member' distinction in the warning letter of December 1966).

Presumably, this figure included some Diggers who had not yet taken full leave of the group. Even so, the number of people whom left the Mime Troupe between September 1966 and May 1967 must have been close to 50. The letter had the following wording:

Dear ..., I am cutting the company down to manageable size. This is an arbitrary move which has some specific motives. If you want to hear them, please let me know, but I have decided to cut back to those people who are now performing and working in this company or who will be performing in the immediate future. To thank you is to negate much sweat and love, but I thank *you* not only for myself but us, those and the rest, who have benefited from what we have done together... Ronny. (81)

Coyote corroborates Davis's account, claiming that the news was taken with alacrity:

On May 1, Ron sent out a letter to thirty five members of the company, firing them in a triage to save the core. When the dust settled (and it settled without rancor or blame, because the situation was so clearly desperate), those remaining began to prepare a national tour of a new show, *L'Amant Militaire* (*The Military Lover*), a remake of an old Goldini (sic) farce that we had revised to comment on the Vietnam War. (1998: 57)

The new Commedia, adapted by a relative newcomer to the Mime Troupe, Joan Holden, was slightly reworked and polished in rehearsal by Davis, and Sandra Archer, the Mime Troupe's deputy director. It is worth noting that Archer had joined the Mime Troupe in 1964 and that Archer and Davis subsequently became a co-habiting pair bond, this lasting until the late 1960s. *L'Amant Militaire* was debuted in San Francisco on May 12 1967 and generally drew good reviews wherever it was performed, (see Edelson, 1975: 365-66 for a listing of reviews). In essence, Holden's dramaturgical approach was a continuation of the formula for politically updating Commedia that had been developed within the Mime Troupe since *Tartuffe* (1964). (The adaptation is outlined in Figure 5.2 on page 168)

Davis remarks that it was 'originally a play about two lovers caught in the web of warfare. Not only did we shift the emphasis from their personal problem to the social situation but the performers who played the roles never dominated the action' (1975c: 82).

Figure 5.2 The San Francisco Mime Troupe's adaptation of Goldoni's *L'Amant Militaire**L'Amant Militaire* (1967)

In the 18th century Goldoni revived the moribund commedia tradition; in the 20th century the Mime Troupe revived Goldoni for performance in the parks. Goldoni's plot episodically treats the army lover of the title; a Spanish lieutenant Alonso, courts the Italian Pantalone's daughter during the Italo-Spanish wars. Goldoni's nation-crossed lovers are finally united, as are their servants, Corallina and Arlecchino, but another *amante militaire* rejects his mistress to pursue his military career. Although Goldoni's Alonso resigns his commission for his Rosaura, he closes the play with ringing rhetoric about love inspiring valor.

Holden underlines the waste of war. She eliminates the parted lovers, converts Pantalone to a (Jewish) capitalist, blends three Goldoni characters into General Garcia, and introduces a black soldier, Espada. As in Goldoni, women are against a war that deprives them of lovers, but only Holden has the General declare: 'The fundamental policy of the Spanish government is to pursue peace with every available weapon.' Clever Brighella and stupid Arlecchino behave traditionally, but at the suggestion of Davis, Holden adds English Punch, who explicitly relates Goldoni's plot to the Vietnam War. New *lazzi* complement those of Goldoni; for example, when Pantalone excuses a slip of his tongue, he slips a tongue from his mouth into the General's hand. Holden's most radical change is a completely new denouement: servant Corallina disguises herself as the Pope, who arbitrarily declares Peace, matches Alonso with his beloved, assigns socialist Brighella to keep capitalist Pantalone's accounts, sends Espada home, and claims Arlecchino for him/herself. Finally, Pope Corallina turns to the audience: 'Listen, my friends - you want something done? Well then, do it yourselves.'

(Source: Cohn, 1980: 42)

A modest, but financially successful, national tour was run between October and December, netting some \$10,000 for the Mime Troupe. Also included in the tour package was a reworked Commedia piece called *Olive Pits* (1966), originally written by Lope de Rueda, and adapted by Peter Berg and Peter Coyote. This won an OBIE (*Village Voice* Off-Broadway award) in 1967. The piece alternated with *Eagle Fuck* (1967), devised by puppeteer Roberto LaMorticello, another Digger who was still prepared to work with the Mime Troupe at this time. Like *L'Amant*, it was a Vietnam commentary, but done with huge puppets. Essentially guerrilla theatre, it was only five minutes in duration and very graphic: village people go about their business, and then a large eagle comes in and rapes and kills them (Coyote, 1998: 58). The tour ended in New York.

A review of a New York performance of *L'Amant Militaire* in *The Times* (London) by Henry Popkin stated:

It is made perfectly clear that the Spaniards in Italy are the Americans in Vietnam. The plot is still basic Goldoni: a Spanish lieutenant courts Pantalone's daughter, but Pantalone favours an amorous Spanish general; to avoid military service, Arlecchino disguises himself as a woman, but is found out and charged with being a pervert. The *deus ex machina*, however, is basic San Francisco Mime Troupe: an actress wearing an ecclesiastical headdress puts her head over the back of the set, announces 'I'm a da Pope!' and puts an end to the fighting. (Davis 1975c: 93-94)

Popkin's review is typical of those of the time insofar as there is little attempt to deconstruct the ways in which the actors present themselves on stage. Depending upon one's view of the most important qualities of good theatre, this either reflects a basic virtue, or a fundamental limitation, in the Mime Troupe's dramaturgy. The play's message is intended to be seen and heard in very explicit terms and is to be

apprehended by way of a relatively simple allegory. There is little evidence of deliberate communication on more subliminal levels.

This provides an interesting contrast with the Living Theatre, which shared with the Mime Troupe a certain didactic or tendentious orientation in its work. Yet the Living Theatre usually sought to reinforce its message through groupings of actors or it focussed on the psychic states of characters and actors, inviting the audience to witness transformations in non-linear ways (e.g., through meditation and chanting). The Mime Troupe seems to have opted for unambiguous visual framing, in keeping with the general styles of both Brecht and the *Commedia dell'Arte*. There are no tableaux vivants, Frankenstein's monsters, or world machines (although from the 1970s collective representations on stage appear to become more common).

Apart from the Mime Troupe's adherence to the aforementioned dramaturgical principles the typical environmental conditions of performance for the Mime Troupe tended to favour simplicity. As noted earlier, the village green setting chosen by the Mime Troupe was less than conducive to subtle stage composition. The sensory environment was often unpredictable (e.g., weather conditions and traffic noise) and could easily impede communication. One of the constant challenges for the Mime Troupe actors in park performances was maintaining audibility. Having performers' faces turned away or otherwise obscured from the audience's view seems to have been avoided. The choice of an apron stage performance frame rather than, say, theatre in the round, reinforced the two-dimensional nature of the group's work. Such framing was clearly deliberate. However, one can ask if there was room, without compromising underlying political messages, for greater experimentation across the full human sensory range.

On a more pragmatic level, this conservatism of *mise-en-scène* in the Mime Troupe may have developed because Davis sometimes found it difficult to maintain a crack guerrilla unit that could work in a more dynamic way on stage. After all, Davis himself was as much dancer as actor. Indeed, Davis lamented the amateurish and hanger-on magnetism of the Mime Troupe at times. Still, it is tempting to conclude that some of the dramaturgy of the Mime Troupe reflects an unwillingness, internally, to experiment radically with actors on stage as a group, in stark contrast to both the Living Theatre and the Performance Group.

In any case, while in New York, Davis sought, in discussion and consultation with Richard Schechner<sup>10</sup>, to establish a radical theatre booking agency. As noted in the previous chapter, this produced the Radical Theatre Repertory (RTR), run by Saul Gottlieb, Mel Howard, and Beverly Landau. Davis quickly distanced himself from what he saw as an East Coast-biased organisation. Despite this withdrawal it shows that Davis and Schechner were keen to network and create an umbrella body to coordinate radical theatre group activities across the country.

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<sup>10</sup> Schechner brought Jerzy Grotowski to see a New York performance. The latter was apparently unimpressed by the show. The Mime Troupe was similarly unimpressed by Grotowski (Davis, 1975c: 141).

### 1968-70: Internal dissent and Brecht's *Congress of the Whitewashers*

At the beginning of 1968 the San Francisco Mime Troupe must have seemed, to outside observers at least, to be functioning very successfully. It had regrouped during 1967, surviving defections by the Diggers and the trauma of a unilateral decision by Davis to reduce the size of the Mime Troupe still further. *L'Amant Militaire* had furthered the group's reputation as an important radical theatre. A new off-shoot, the 'Gorilla Marching Band' debuted in March in Berkeley as part of the 'Peace and Freedom Party' founding convention. Fully supported by Davis, it functioned as an anti-military detachment, an apparently shambling outfit that played instruments and twirled batons in riotous fashion, sometimes to the tune of the national anthem, and it could be sent off to draft protests and Vietnam Day events. It was cheap and easy to deploy.

Further diversification followed. The 'Gutter Puppets' also evolved during 1968. This was another highly portable, short-notice sub-group, the emphasis being on agit-prop and beat-the-system instruction skits. *Meter Maid* (1968), a spoof showing people how to cheat parking meters with ring tabs from aluminum drink cans was a prime example. The Gutter Puppets also used 'krankies' (hand-cranked reels of paper) and 'flippies' (flip-over storyboards or cartoons) to communicate information. These techniques borrowed heavily from Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre, a group with which the Mime Troupe both felt strong empathy and had regular contact. The former had in turn borrowed such forms from Europe. The Gutter Puppets initiative proved to be difficult to sustain, however, because agit-prop was becoming something of a fashion in itself and it was being misappropriated by Yippies and Diggers alike in Davis's view. The Women's Drill Team, a feminist performing unit, was created by Sandra Archer and Joan Holden. Holden also drafted a manifesto to accompany protest actions, but this internal development of 1968 lasted only a short time.

While these side activities were being pursued, the Mime Troupe also continued with Commedia adaptations, such as *Ruzzante or The Veteran* (1968) and the *Farce of Patelin* (1968). Despite the frame-breaking aspects of the various new side groups, the dramaturgy of the main Mime Troupe fare remained relatively formulaic. One Commedia did not differ radically in appearance from another. It is clear that this regularity was not entirely intentional. Davis himself has acknowledged that by 1968 making shows in the parks was no longer unique to the Mime Troupe and that the group had become locked into a cycle of skirmishes with authorities (Davis, 1975c: 100). One could argue that this situation in itself was telling in terms of group functioning. The Mime Troupe was a respectable countercultural institution and could attract new members easily. Yet while it generated novel peripheral projects the core activities seemed rigidified. This suggests a certain lack of trust or openness amongst members insofar as experimentation in performance was largely absent. Alternatively, the group may have felt pulled in several directions by external demands and the general ambience of angst on the streets in the wake of the Summer of Love, making it difficult to draw the boundaries necessary for refined and highly disciplined work. Another

possibility, and Davis suggests this on more than one occasion, is that the group became complacent and was convinced that it had arrived at an ideal theatrical and political mode of action. It is tempting to read this period, following Bion, as a kind of flight response in as its work-group foundations are beginning to be eroded by social-emotional factors.

In July 1968 the Mime Troupe moved to 450 Alabama Street (often given as 455). The building was considerably larger than the Howard loft and was in an industrial district, between Portrero Hill and the Mission District:

It offered space for a library, kitchen, office, and access to the rooftop. Space provided for local branch of Students For A Democratic Society (SDS). San Francisco Newsreel took an office there, beginning in August 1968. This group consisted of radical filmmakers and distributors with Maoist leanings who were also influenced by the Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers. (<http://www.diggers.org/chronology5.asp>)

In principle the Mime Troupe was merely furthering its commitment to the Movement with such accommodations, but this move may also have been a way of deflecting attention from the workings of the group itself.

#### Renewed internal dissent

The move to new premises, should, in theory, have eased some of the internal pressures and injected the Mime Troupe with a new vitality through cross-pollination with other groups. However, shortly after the relocation the question of restructuring was raised yet again:

We recognized the need to operate a company with many people, not just a family. [...] We had functioned under an occasional leadership called a Gerontocracy whereby the oldest members became a committee of decision-makers. It didn't work. The oldest members were not at all interested in the day-to-day running of the company. Once in a new space Sandy Archer and Joan Holden delivered a yellow paper declaring a need for a new organization beginning with an Inner Core, a group of five to be elected by the company at large, to decide on the direction and policy of the company. An Inner Core was elected and suggested salaries for all members. (Davis 1975c: 98)

Davis did not attempt to veto the move and the group agreed upon \$25 per week per person as the basic wage for a company of 20 paid members (including a secretary who was given a more livable weekly wage of \$75). This arrangement lasted for some months, but the standard Troupe member wage had to be lowered before long. The Mime Troupe thus had the paradoxical situation of only being able to retain as members otherwise affluent people who could find ways of coping with such below-subsistence incomes. The Inner Core structure, although far from satisfactory by most accounts, was retained until the beginning of 1970.

In late September 1968 the Troupe helped organise a 'Radical Theatre Festival' at San Francisco State College. The Mime Troupe performed, along with El Teatro Campesino, Bread and Puppet Theatre, Gut Theatre, and Berkeley Agit-prop. There were discussions, workshops, panels, notably one where the lines between 'radical left' and 'radical right' theatres were drawn by Davis. 'Radical left' included those in attendance at the festival who appeared to serve a non-elite constituency. 'Radical right' applied to groups such as the Living Theatre, the Open Theatre and the Performance Group, theatres Davis and others regarded as too concerned with aesthetics and 'high art' (see Davis, 1975b).

However strong the camaraderie between radical theatres of the left might have been on this occasion, it was not enough to mitigate the increasing mood of dissent within the Mime Troupe, some of which was fed by its own community outreach policy:

We had a tradition in the Mime Troupe of associating with groups outside and inside our organization. We had shared space with the San Francisco New School, SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), the Diggers; and in the summer of '68 we took in the San Francisco Newsreel. Our association with the New School and SDS was progressive. We were expanded by them; we didn't threaten their existence and we helped each other. The Diggers left and came to annoy us, while SF Newsreel haunted the place. (Davis, 1975c: 100)

The politics of the Newsreel seemed to take the heaviest toll:

The basic ideological lines running through their organization were a rabid American variety of Maoism and an aggressive activism which stemmed from a New York group called 'Up Against the Wall Mutherfucker,' [...] Both the doctrinaire sloganeering of Maoism and the anarchic Mutherfuckers implanted seeds of chaos that sustained a general feeling of discontent. (100)

The San Francisco Newsreel ideology was merely an extreme form of ultrademocracy: anarchic Maoism, or revolution without leadership. The Mime Troupe, vulnerable partly because of internal uncertainty as to its status as a recognised theatrical institution, grappled with ultrademocratic aspirations:

We had as a group moved as one person, a theatrical group functioning as a single artist. With the increased overhead and commitments to a steady company we were in the midst of a changeover from Guerrilla Group to Established Radical Theatre company [...] Organizationally we had been a one-or-two-person-lead group with a lot of creativity coming forward. As we expanded, the organization of the company became a burden rather than a facilitator. I sensed the change but couldn't figure out what to do about it, others wanted a chance to direct, perform and do the creating. I couldn't give up nor settle down. I was supposed to come up with ideas but was confused. We had a group of people who were willing to cooperate, but cooperate about what? For what? For whom? Where? And of course why? (Davis, 1975c: pp. 113-14)

In many respects the Living Theatre wrestled with the same issues when it returned to Europe from its bruising American tour in mid-1969. The Living Theatre attempted a piece called *Saturation City* while in Morocco, with little result. As a gesture in the direction of greater collaboration on stage work, Davis and others tried to develop, over the course of more than 12 months, an entirely new work, based on Latin American history, provisionally entitled *The Life and Times of Che Guevara as Seen by the Inmates of the United States of America*. Davis recalled that 'It was to be a pageant play on wagons', and was intended to counter the glibness, and the 'heavy Maoist dogmatism' surrounding the use of the term 'guerrilla' at the



time (117), but after extensive research and regular study groups, the Troupe could not come up collectively with a script, or a stage design, so the project was abandoned.

Brecht's *Congress of the Whitewashers* (1969)

After this frustration, Davis and Archer allowed themselves to be talked into embarking upon an ambitious production of Brecht's *Congress of the Whitewashers* or *Turandot* by an occasional collaborator with the Mime Troupe, Juris Svendsen. Rehearsals began in January 1969. Brecht had written *Congress* in 1953, but it had remained unpublished until 1959. Brecht's play, departing from the Chinese Emperor's daughter-resists-arranged-marriages-plot of the original *Turandot*, concerns the ambiguous role of intellectuals in the transformation of Chinese society. In Brecht's view the 'tuis', as he calls them, tend to mask the truth rather than uphold it.

The work was adapted and developed over a 12-month performance period. The cast was heavily involved in researching the work. Davis wanted it performed in the style of Chinese Opera, so much time was spent studying and training in a form that was alien to most Mime Troupe members. Instructors came from outside to coach the cast in some of the disciplines associated with Chinese Opera. (The scenario for *Congress of the Whitewashers* is outlined in Figure 5.3 below)

Figure 5.3 The scenario for *Congress of the Whitewashers*

*Congress of the Whitewashers* (1969)

The people are dissatisfied over the astronomical price of cotton and too open to explanations from the revolutionary, Kai-Ho. The Emperor convenes a congress of intellectuals to whitewash his reputation and provide an answer to 'Where did the cotton go?' that will satisfy the people. His kinky daughter, Turandot, who is sexually stimulated by well-phrased opinions, promises to marry the most successful.

The intellectuals are a powerful caste in China. They control the universities, work for the State and deal profitably in cleverly formulated opinions. Kai-Ho himself was trained a Tui but was thrown out of the brotherhood for refusing to deal in sophistries. Since the Tuis are the stepping stone to political power, an ambitious petit-bourgeois, Gopher Gogh, turns highwayman in order to buy his way into the brotherhood. After three unsuccessful tries at guessing how much three times five makes and several pay-offs, Gogh is rejected.

The congress of the whitewashers is a debacle. The Tuis fail to produce a convincing explanation of the cotton crisis and unrest mounts among the people. Gopher Gogh, now Turandot's lover, comes to the Emperor's aid by repressing the question altogether, as well as the Tuis, their art, and the people. The *coup* comes too late, however; Kai-Ho's forces enter the city, oust the corrupt regime and establish a reign of the people.

Source: Edelson (1975: 212-13)

Brecht's depiction of the social and political position of the intellectual is consistent with Gramsci's view of traditional intellectuals and their service to the bourgeoisie. Traditionally, according to Gramsci, intellectuals acted in the service of the bourgeoisie to cement, if not create, the false consciousness of the proletariat or the peasantry, often removing the need for suppression by military force. They functioned as propagandists, even though, as one commentator has presented Gramsci's view, they were 'intellectuals

who – mistakenly – considered themselves to be autonomous of social classes and who appeared to embody a historical continuity above and beyond socio-political change. Examples would be writers, artists, philosophers, and especially, ecclesiastics' (McLellan, 1979: 181). Attempts by younger members of the bourgeois intelligentsia to emancipate and work alongside the peasants, as was the case with the *narodniki* in Russia, were too inherently contradictory to succeed.

On the other hand, the 'organic' intellectual can belong to a class other than the bourgeoisie, has a similar role in serving that other class, and theoretically at least, here the intellectual may fulfill a limited emancipatory role, principally through membership of a political party. However, there is always the temptation for disparate organic intellectuals to collude as a class in their own right, benefiting from the existing power structure whilst affecting critical interrogation and protest. This places the intellectual in an ambiguous position.

In terms of the actual historical context of the 1960s, and the position of the American intellectual, the problems faced by intellectuals in China during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1969 provided a concrete illustration of the suspicion towards the intelligentsia in communist countries. Furthermore, Fitzgerald (1986: 388) and Gardner (1978: 16), in their studies of contemporary communal experiments in the United States, caution that these have been built on a longstanding heritage of anti-intellectualism in America that is not to be found in other Western countries. Sargeant, in describing the emphasis on the principle of practical action in the New Left, notes that '[t]his principle, incorporates, more for the New Left than it did for the existentialists, a basic antiintellectualism. This antiintellectualism, in addition to being an American tradition, also relates to the basic criticism of western society – hypocrisy' (1978: 163).

One can argue then, following Gramsci, that the reflexive, stigmatised intellectual in America in the 1960s faced limited choices. One could make a concerted effort to form an attachment with non-bourgeois classes, as was the case with many young intellectuals. They gravitated towards the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and Students for a Democratic Society, which, initially at least, had a strong civil rights focus. Alternatively, in order to avoid some of the inherent contradictions of such moves, an intellectual could take an inward-looking turn, searching for legitimation and community within intellectual affinity groups first, perhaps taking it to a wider community at some point, but not necessarily. Given the demographics of the 1960s, and the abundance of young, white, well-educated, middle-class intellectuals, the temptation and pressure to follow the latter path would have been strong. Furthermore, in order to transcend the present contradictions of class society, it was almost logical to reach back to an imagined, pre-industrial, pre-capitalist past. This could take the form of the communal village, which, as the countercultural record regarding urban and rural communes in the 1960s clearly shows, was a popular choice.

The San Francisco Diggers seem to have embraced the first and last of the above options. Many members had an intellectual pedigree. They looked back to history for models of society, and yet they also sought to engage directly with contemporary politics (taking SDS head-on in the process). In the case of the Living Theatre, Beck and Malina clearly belonged to the American intellectual avant-garde tradition, but they also looked inwards, dramatising the Living Theatre, in the mid-1960s at least, as a self-contained nomadic anarchist community. With the Performance Group, as is argued in the next chapter, there was a strong attraction for the notion of theatre as the embodiment of the original, pre-industrial, *polis*.

Davis seems to have had no time for communalism or nostalgia for *communitas*, although he worried about anti-intellectualism in American society. His insistence on staging *Congress* was a call to intelligent Marxist analysis, but it was also tinged with resentment towards Mime Troupe members:

The work was principled yet perhaps improbable. There are limits to theatrical complexities in the open air. The very environment competed with reflection and the patience necessary for great lessons. The company struggled heroically with the obstacles. I think one of my motives must have been to punish the group. 'If you're gonna be a revolutionary, then figure out how to perform Brecht and become a Marxist.' As I punished them I also punished myself. (Davis, 1975c: 124)

This last comment brings Davis closer to Richard Schechner as a practitioner than either might wish to acknowledge. Both took the internal dynamics of the theatre groups that they had founded very personally, and although Davis eschewed psychologism for the most part, his perception here mirrors that of Schechner in relation to the Performance Group's adaptation of *Macbeth*, as I argue in the next chapter. Both saw the stage work as secondary to the drama taking place within the group, echoing Bion's view of the potential for social-emotional concerns to invade virtually all groups at some point or another during their lifespans.

As it happened, the production itself yielded mixed results. Rehearsals made it clear that the play had to be shortened and the order of scenes changed. In performance there were initial problems with volubility and projection. There was also the logistical challenge; 11 cast members had to play more than 40 roles. The work was debuted on March 29, 1969, in Berkeley and closed a year later, after some 110 performances in various outdoor locations (some shows were presented indoors).

This record of performances indicates that the production must have enjoyed good public support. However, despite the departure from Commedia, and the return to Brecht, there does not seem to have been a radical reorientation in staging. Some performers in *Congress* no doubt acquired new skills because of the switch to Chinese opera, but there is little indication that group solidarity increased through performance or that compelling and epic new groupings, such as those sought by Brecht himself, were generated. If anything, the basic look seems to have been an exotic version of the familiar Mime Troupe dramaturgy: marked stylisation in costume, masks, gestures and vocal delivery.

Davis's abdication as leader

Overall, Mime Troupe members do not appear to have enjoyed the *Congress* experience. One actor described it as follows:

We had a guy from Hong Kong who taught us sleeve movements. He had us walking around in circles waving our sleeves. That was painful. Nobody learned much. Ronny was always yelling at us - we weren't taking it seriously enough, etc. As a choice, the contradictions in Ronny's tastes - all the weirdness of his choices was bringing us closer and closer to a series of showdowns. That was a very heavy show to take to the parks. (Friedman qtd. in Edelson, 1975: 215)

Davis saw the problem in terms of a mismatch between a revolutionary agenda, New Left norms and a Mime Troupe membership that resisted any notion of authority:

We had tried various organization schemes - loose leadership, company meetings, gerontocracy and finally an elected Inner Core of five members. The social makeup and class of the members of the company plus the life style and history of the Mime Troupe did not help the more democratic organizational plan. Participatory democracy (inherited from SDS) as practiced in the groups of collectives, communes, guerrilla groups, loosely knit action groups, is not likely to lead to revolutionary work nor sustained revolutionary activity. In the theatre, it is likely in the opposite direction - congratulatory participation, amateurism and bourgeois choices. (1975c:124)

The main internal difficulty, in Davis's view, which leaves aside questions about individual egos and personality styles, appears to have been the loss of control over professional standards that developed as the Mime Troupe aged. The Inner Core was not able to prevent the re-emergence of the large 'extended family' phenomenon that had impeded the Mime Troupe a few years earlier:

As distinctions between expertise and will dissolved due to pressure from participatory democracy and idealistic fantasy, the antagonism between professional performer and amateur participating member increased. (125)

Conversely, the outside social and cultural environment itself seemed at that time to have become theatricalised:

The society around our theatrical enclave became more and more theatrical. The Mime Troupe had revived the emphasis on the single performer from 1960 to 1965 and made the skilled performer a probability. From 1965 to 1970 the lid was lifted off the big box. The hippies unleashed a surge of incompetence from below and the lumpen middle class wanted to express itself by being. (125)

This fundamentally Marxist analysis attempts to explain the problems in the Mime Troupe in terms of class and categories such as 'theatre', without great scrutiny of the personal internal group dynamic.

Furthermore, there is the implication that only Davis understands the difference between amateurism and professionalism in the Mime Troupe, suggesting an elitist attitude on his part. Alternatively, one could argue that Davis's position reflects the dilemma of the intellectual as defined by Gramsci: intellectuals are generally the products of privilege, not the proletariat. Serving the people as an organic intellectual, according to Gramsci, requires dedication to a political party, something that Davis does not appear to have

been willing to do at this time. Others in the Mime Troupe were pushing for more explicit alignment with radical Maoist politics, if not paid-up Communist Party membership.

According to Davis, at this time, after the demise of the Inner Core and the subsequent failure to find an agreed structural alternative, the most professionally-oriented members departed, along with most of the unskilled drifters, leaving the 'middle ground,' which 'became a collective' (125). Davis himself took leave of absence in December 1969 to go to Chicago and develop performance material based on the Chicago Eight conspiracy trials taking place there at the time. He sat in on the trial and made contact with those involved, including people behind the scenes. His plan was to secure rights to the trial transcripts in order to turn them into theatre *verité*, using the actual participants. This proved difficult to orchestrate and Davis returned to San Francisco, but not to the Mime Troupe, although he did complete obligations to finish *Congress of the Whitewashers*, which closed in March 1970.

#### The post-Davis transition

A few months after Davis left, Sandra Archer, a member since 1964 and the group's deputy leader, also left. As the struggle to establish a collective was taking place the mood of ultrademocracy seems to have been dominant. Sharon Lockwood, who joined the Mime Troupe around 1969 (and who went on to become one of the Mime Troupe's best known performers until her departure in 1995), expressed it in relatively mild terms:

Ronnie Davis remained the director of the company until January of this year. While we were doing a Brecht play, *Congress of Whitewashers*, we went through a whole big internal struggle, and then we started having political education classes because we realized how much we didn't know. We were doing a play we didn't really understand at first, but we came through to a Marxist-Leninist point of view. As a result of our political development, we collectivized the company. Ronnie left to do this media thing based on the Chicago conspiracy trial. Now every decision is made collectively by the company; we make all artistic decisions jointly. (Lockwood qtd. in Rich, 1971: p. 55)

Another member, Steve Friedman, put things more militantly:

We've got a three-point program. Point one: 'All art is political, whether it declares itself to be political or not.' Point two: 'Serve the people by serving the Movement.' The idea is that we want to do propaganda, and to be able to do propaganda, you have to have a line. Having a line for propaganda doesn't come out of an agit-prop theatre group sitting down among themselves and deciding what are their personal points of view. The real idea of guerilla theatre is the Chinese example, the Vietnamese and Korean examples; it is an arm of the party. It's not that we're related to the American Communist Party, but we're related to the Movement and to specific groups within the Movement. Point three: 'Smash individualism, smash chauvinism.' This point is indispensable to our operating without an elite, without a conception that there is a genius at the head of us. (Friedman qtd. in Rich, 1971: 55)

Friedman explains the political education and discussion practice in the Troupe as being based on a reading list and meetings every two weeks to discuss those readings (e.g., Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, Lenin's

*State and Revolution*, Mao's *Four Essays in Philosophy*). He aligns the Mime Troupe's philosophy with that of the Black Panthers:

We believe that the form of government in America must be changed by any means necessary. We're constantly seeking allegiance with anybody who is moving to do that. We subscribe to the Black Panther Party's ten point platform and program, in fact, it's printed on the back of our programs. Where we live, at least, the Panther Party is the vanguard of the Movement. [...] We consider ourselves a cultural arm of the vanguard. (56)

When Lockwood is questioned about directing, and whether or not there is a single director for any given play, she replies:

No, it's sort of equally distributed; people have certain responsibilities, certain tasks to carry out, and everyone has an area for which they're responsible. There is always an outside eye, but I think we're at a point where we really trust each other. [...] Also, we trust each other enough to give each other suggestions on stage; it really works out fantastically. (Lockwood qtd. in Rich, 1971: 57)

The ways in which the problematics of the Mime Troupe are framed at this time by Lockwood, Friedman and Davis suggest a form of flight response consistent with Bion's basic assumption group. The struggles within the group are interpreted in socio-political and historical terms, without great acknowledgement of the personalities, emotions, and idiosyncracies of those involved, except for Davis, and even this is moderated to prevent unnecessary distraction from the important task aspects of the Mime Troupe and its role in society. In other words, a flight into ultrademocracy may have helped deflect confrontation with personal psychological and emotional issues within the group and between group members. By keeping matters at the level of political principles, it perhaps also raised the stakes, so that no compromises could be made, and a new order became an inevitable result.

Whatever the enthusiasm and ideological fervour of those left in the group, there remained the challenge of presenting new work. The first major production in the post-Davis era was *The Independent Female or A Man has his Pride* (1970) and, as the title suggests, it was about women's rights, and was framed around the struggle between a young businessman and a dedicated feminist for the heart and mind of the man's fiancée. It was written by Joan Holden and directed by Sandra Archer, the latter's last involvement with the Mime Troupe. It marked a transitional point insofar as Holden scripted it as a melodrama. This became the principal style for the Mime Troupe for several years from that point. The Mime Troupe took what it thought was the finished work and previewed it before a feminist audience. The Mime Troupe was harshly challenged for what was perceived as a capitulatory ending, and the lack of expression of sisterhood. This led the Troupe to modify it to make the central female figure more defiant. It was subsequently toured and was well received. The play helped establish Holden as principal writer for the Mime Troupe.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Holden had been a member of San Francisco Mime Troupe since 1967. A graduate of Reed College, and a Berkeley 'drop-out' prior to joining San Francisco Mime Troupe, she had spent two years in France in pursuit of a literary career, and returned to the U.S. hoping to become a journalist. When this was unfruitful, her husband, Arthur Holden, who had been a Mime Troupe member since 1963, suggested that she write for the Troupe (See Burch, 2000: 10). Her first task was an adaptation of Goldoni's *L'Amant Militaire*.

After *The Independent Female* came *Los Siete* (1970), a work based on the actual case of seven Latino youths charged with the murder of a policeman. The cast researched the work as a group. The defence committee for the defendants was approached to supply material for, and advice on, writing the text, and the committee agreed, also attending a rehearsal of the work and giving their approval. This was regarded as a minor breakthrough for the Troupe. It had gone beyond intellectualising to direct engagement with activists in the community involved in an immediate issue. However, in some respects it was merely the continuation of a process started with the *Dowry* in 1962 and refined in 1965 with the *Minstrel Show*. The previewing practice also dated back to earlier times. *The Minstrel Show* was previewed for feedback in front of local SNCC and other civil rights groups.

According to Holden the experiences of creating, and relative successes in reception, of these two works provided a turning point: 'Now we had found our calling. Our next play, *Seize the Time* (1970), was intended as part of the movement to defend the Black Panthers, and we adopted the slogan the Panthers had borrowed from China: 'Serve the people' (1975: p. 28). *Seize the Time* was collectively written and directed, beginning with a script based upon the book by Bobby Seale, and although the process of sharing the text amongst many hands was to some extent unintentional, it proved to the Troupe that they could produce a coherent work that way: '(It) was done in a month and had its imperfections, but they were not the ones expected from a collective production. The show was focussed, intense, and had a strong style – and nobody ever said, 'You need a director'' (30).

The Mime Troupe also appears to have embraced the principle of living communally at this time, as one slightly bemused visitor commented after his direct encounters in the early 1970s:

The Mime is, I think, the oldest performing guerrilla theater around, begun in 1959 by Ronnie Davis, who has since left. Presently, they run themselves as a commune, and are, in their own words, 'dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism'. [...] They are a strange mélange of people, the Mime. They live on something like thirty dollars a week each, in a number of communal houses, and work out of a headquarters on Alabama Street, in downtown San Francisco – an area filled with railroad trucks, warehouses, bums and madly driven forty-foot trailer trucks... The Mime is a theater basically of white dropouts. (Weisman, 1973: 117)

This description probably applied for only a short period of time as the general trend of communal living amongst countercultural youth faded and the Mime Troupe attempted to broaden its demographic composition.

## Conclusion

From the early 1970s onwards, and after some internal conflict between hard-line communists and non-ideological 'hangers-on' who subsequently left, the philosophy, decision-making, and work creation processes of the Mime Troupe appear to have more or less stabilised. The term 'socialist' came to replace

'communist' in descriptions of the group's politics. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s the main guidance, if not named leadership, came from members such as Joan Holden, Dan Chumley, Arthur Holden, and Sharon Lockwood. Holden became the principal resident playwright, and Dan Chumley became increasingly involved in directing. They married, as did Arthur Holden and Sharon Lockwood.

The extent to which a more thoroughly egalitarian decision-making structure has characterised the post-Davis era remains conjectural. One could argue that there was merely a changing of the guard, or guards to be precise. Davis acknowledges that he and Archer were co-habiting for a significant period of the Troupe's existence and that this should perhaps have been dealt with more explicitly than it was, implying that personal relationships were not given sufficient attention in the group dynamic (Davis, 1975c: 113). The key co-habiting dominant pair in the group (Davis and Archer) was thus replaced, not necessarily by design, by another primary pair (Holden and Chumley). It was more the historical moment; leadership was officially 'out' in the counterculture in the 1960s, and Davis the leader had to go. Julian Beck and Judith Malina went 'on leave' as directors until the tide had gone out on ultrademocracy, and then returned, while Davis did not. This is not to say that Davis's own personality did not play a role in the challenge to leadership. He appears to have been dictatorial and volatile in his conduct at times. Yet there is probably a circumstantial aspect to his departure. As Holden noted in the mid-1970s:

The San Francisco Mime Troupe came to collective creation largely by default. Ideology reduced the founder and director, R.G. Davis, to an equal position with others in the company. When he and the other experienced director quit, we began a series of experiments in group production. (1975: p. 28)

In the same article Holden spells out six basic principles of the Mime Troupe's approach to collective creation (I have listed her introductory remark as a principle here):

1. If a group is to produce something together, the first step is agreement on and commitment to a subject. This can be forged by common experience, or by long discussions and research done in common.
2. Let people learn what they can't do
3. Don't do anything just on principle: do what works.
4. Don't have two directors for one rehearsal.
5. Don't try to write dialogue in a group: the wait for the next line becomes intolerable.
6. For writers: learn when to leave town.
7. Serve the people. (33)

The above principles could be said to have applied to the San Francisco Mime Troupe in the Davis era with the exception of the first two points. There was much collaboration while Davis was leader. The difference is that it was filtered through a singular leadership figure in the earlier period, and Davis seems to have been much less sanguine about allowing for potentially unproductive experimentation.

With what some would call typical Marxist reasoning, Davis himself saw the leadership issue in historical terms: 'The troupe was on a path of democratic collectivism that most left organizations were to struggle with for the next two years' (Davis, 1975c: 126).



Interviewed some 15 years later, Holden said much the same thing:

The Mime Troupe has been through a lot of changes. We went through our collectivization and our Maoist period and our working-class period, and now we do it in a different way. I mean our business is much more professionalized; professionalization – that's another phase that these kind of institutions went through, if they survived, in order to survive... So now we're in this paradoxical position of being a venerable institution that's still part of the counterculture. (Holden qtd. in Kessler, 1990: 207)

It seems fair to say that, at a fundamental level, the philosophical similarities are greater than the personal differences for most of those who have been involved in the Mime Troupe. The Mime Troupe, much like the Living Theatre, was conceived in the knowledge that it would occupy a historical and political role as much as an artistic one. Davis, upon the purpose of theatre, framed it in instrumental terms that still seem to make sense, even if the points of reference are a little dated:

Individualism is one of two enemies the cultural guerrilla, almost invariably of bourgeois origin or at least education, has to combat in himself. The other is elitism, an extension of the first: me with my talents and extraordinary awareness, or our group with its hotline, must be replaced as ultimate values by the job to be done. Once these enemies are destroyed the individual is really free to play any of the roles he is called upon by history and necessity to fulfill: to be an actor today, a director tomorrow and next week a writer; a writer today, a publisher tomorrow and next year a book salesman. Ché came from the hills and headed the Bank of Cuba; Fidel waters tobacco plants and talks agricultural technology. (1975c: 164)

In saying this, however, one wonders if Davis is substituting the word individual for intellectual here, and, if so, whether this constrains the freedom to play roles. The San Francisco Mime Troupe of the 1960s, although changing in composition at the larger level over that period of time, was, at its inner core, a fundamentally intellectual group. It is interesting that it seems to have striven hard to downplay personal identities. Unlike the Living Theatre and the Performance Group, for which there are accounts or descriptions of membership that give some sense of personalities, the Mime Troupe has remained somewhat opaque in terms of personal identities, except for founder R. G. Davis. One could argue that in this respect the flight response of the Mime Troupe was more extreme than that of the Living Theatre. The latter clearly developed its own fantasy about its destiny and role in history, which may have helped it ignore some of its internal social-emotional difficulties, but it also allowed for self-expression within the group, both on-stage and off-stage. The Mime Troupe seems to have relegated the social-emotional bonds in the group, where discussed at all, to incidental details. Pair-bonds, for example, are not mentioned, and personalities are masked, much in keeping with principles of staging. It is possible that some of the difficulties experienced by the group in the late 1960s could have been resolved by direct attention to the sociometry of the group, obviating the need for Davis to quit entirely. Alternatively, the larger current of ultrademocracy may have been so strong as to render such efforts ineffectual. This seems to have been the case with the Performance Group, where social-emotional relationships were placed centre-stage, and still the group fragmented under fraught and acrimonious circumstances.

## Chapter Six

### The Performance Group

Anyone who has worked in the theatre, or on any project in which a small group uses feelings as raw material, knows the intensity and bitterness, the devotion and love that characterizes such enterprises. The Performance Group has its share of conflicts, shifting alliances, explosions. From week to week one member or another is dissatisfied about something, and possibly to a degree that makes him feel that the whole project is unsupportable. Notices appear on the bulletin board; meetings are called. [...] Most important by far is our struggle to expose our feelings, to reveal ourselves, to be open, receptive, vulnerable; to give and take hard and deeply; to use impulse and feeling in our work. And to believe that excellence in art, is ultimately, a function of wholeness as a human being. (Schechner, 1970c: 184-86<sup>1</sup>)

#### Introduction

The above description connotes an image of the Performance Group as a volatile but purposeful entity, united by a commitment to theatre as honest revelation of the vulnerable, real self, not a pandering to cheap entertainment or glib political sloganeering. The impression is one of a hard-fought mutual contract, developed over time. Yet, the Performance Group, founded in 1967 by Richard Schechner, was something of a latecomer in American radical theatre of the 1960s. The group was conceived as the American answer to Jerzy Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium, or Polish Laboratory Theatre. Following Grotowski, the Performance Group used classical texts, e.g., *Dionysus in 69* (1968) and *Makbeth* (1969), as the starting point for a production. In these adaptations the performers provided the other material, firstly, as bodies on stage, turning physical exercises into rituals, and adapting rituals from other cultures to provide non-literary narratives. They also appeared as psychological entities, people who broke through the theatrical frame to declare their personal identities and concerns, and to offer their interpretations of the work at hand or current events in America. They also confronted each other as individuals behind their assigned roles.

During the period 1967-71 the group created one other major piece entitled *Commune* (1970-71). This work attracted less media attention than *Dionysus in 69*. The latter was often discussed alongside Ragni, Rado and McDermott's *Hair* (1967) and the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now* (1968), principally because of the use of nudity in all three works. It was also because of the explicit invitations in *Dionysus* for the audience to participate in caresses and intimate communications with the actors. Participation in *Dionysus in 69*, initially at least, allowed members of the audience to be very intimate with the performers. A broadcast-quality film was made of *Dionysus in 69* by emergent Hollywood director Brian De Palma (De Palma and Rubin, 1970). A lavishly illustrated book of the production was published by the Performance

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<sup>1</sup> The book is unpaginated. My numbering starts (p. 1) on the page beginning with the lines: 'The audience begins to assemble around 7:45 P.M.'

Group, under Schechner's editorship, boasting some 360 photographs by three professional photographers. Reproductions of photographer Max Waldman's artistic shots of the Birth Ritual in the play were sold through *The Drama Review*. It was a high profile, commercially successful production. *Commune*, on the other hand, was much more circumspect, and was intended to question the communal utopian impetus in American history.

*Commune* ran, on and off, for two years. *Dionysus in 69* ran for a year, and *Makbeth* ran for less than a month. All three works had as a central theme the politics of being a group. As noted earlier, in contrast to the overt anarchist politics of the Living Theatre and the New Left orientation of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, there was no clear association with a particular ideology or philosophy. Instead, a combination of the politics of individual experience, often explored through group therapy, and a pre-industrial politics of the group experience, based on the classical Athenian *polis*, and rituals in other cultures, informed the philosophy of the group. In this sense, the politics of the Performance Group seemed to be removed from the New Left and the contemporary principles of participatory democracy. The group as self-referential tribe or community was more important.

Extensive commentaries on both the historical development of the group and its key productions have been provided by Schechner across several texts, including *Public Domain* (1969), *Dionysus in 69: The Performance Group* (1970), *Environmental Theater* (1973), *Makbeth: After Shakespeare* (1978), and *The End of Humanism: Writings on Performance* (1982). Several other authors, including Bigsby (1985: 124-46), Croyden (1974: 193-208), Morris (1989: 49-61), Papin (1985), Rieser (1982: 204-24), Ronen (1976: 106-53), Sainer (1997: 127-65), Shank (1982), and Umlas (1982: 279-300) have outlined the history of the group and/or analysed major productions. Lichti (1986: 103-54), in particular, has discussed the three key works of 1967-70 in detail. Furthermore, several reviews and analyses of *Dionysus in 69* ([Stefan] Brecht, 1969a; Lester, 1968; Loney, 1968), *Makbeth* (Kerr, 1969; Lahr, 1969; Novick, 1970; Sainer, 1970), and *Commune* (Gilman 1971; Tribby 1971) appeared during the 1968-71 period.

My principal interest is in the overall dramaturgy of the group, or the group paradigm, rather than details of mise-en-scène for specific productions, particularly because, unlike the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, there is ample information, thanks mainly to Schechner, about the group's interpersonal processes. With this focus in mind, I do not rehearse in depth the production history of the Performance Group.

My narrative begins with an outline of Richard Schechner's involvement in radical theatre prior to his founding of the Performance Group. The group's working dynamic surrounding the creation of *Dionysus in 69* (1968), *Makbeth* (1969) and *Commune* (1970-71) is examined. Special attention is given to the analytical and confessional insider narratives within Richard Schechner's theatre writings from the 1960s

and 1970s. I focus on the Performance Group's troubled attempt to construct *Makbeth* (around Shakespeare's *Macbeth*) during a period of conflict and crisis that resulted in the reconstitution of the Performance Group by Schechner in March 1970. I argue that the group process, as played out across the three key productions of the 1967-71, conforms to Bion's flight/fight basic assumption group. I also argue that this pattern, and the crisis around *Makbeth*, was in large measure predetermined by conflict between three factors:

- a) an underlying negative idea of the group as both the primal horde and the Oedipal family;
- b) an eagerness by its members to treat the group as therapeutic entity (for the individuals in the group); and
- c) a positive neo-classical and transcultural ideal of the group as a site for *communitas*.

### 1960-67: precursors to the Performance Group

It is important to consider Performance Group founder Richard Schechner's early career because of the frequent assertions, as noted above, that have been made about the Performance Group as a non-political theatre (See especially Davis, 1975b; Croyden, 1974: 207). Certainly, compared to groups such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe, El Teatro Campesino, and even the Living Theatre, both Richard Schechner's career (as an academic), and the work of the Performance Group overall, seem, on the surface at least, apolitical in terms of subject matter and affiliations to external groups. In other words, while one could say that the Performance Group was clearly a part of the counterculture, it was not overtly a theatre of the New Left or the Movement. Indeed, according to William Shephard, one of the original members, its orientation was 'instinctual', seeking the kind of oceanic *communitas* experience described by Victor Turner, rather than experimenting with any specific community or communal structure:

Unlike counterculture groups such as the Black Panthers, the Student Democratic Society (sic), the Yippies, and the Weathermen who had specific sociopolitical goals, the Group had no particular prescription for society other than our own brand of collective vitality. We had no program or manifesto beyond the act of performance; our choice of *The Bacchae* as a vehicle for the Group dynamic was organic to the nature of our collective and the times in which we lived – ecstatic, instinctual forces in opposition to the authority of the political-military-industrial complex of American society. (1991: 237)

At the commencement of work on *Dionysus in 69* in January 1968, the composition of the Performance Group was, according to Shephard, relatively homogeneous:

Some, like Joan (McIntosh), Pat (McDermott), Ciel (Smith) and me were former students at the NYU School of the Arts. Others, like Richard Dia and Margaret Ryan, were frustrated artistic souls who taught in public schools while looking for something to fulfill their secret longings for self expression. (William) Finley and Sam Blazer, on the other hand, had been on the outskirts of the artistic New Left for some time without finding a suitable niche for their talents, but Remi (Barclay) and Jason (Bosseau) were perhaps the best examples of a social description which fitted

us all: young, white, middle-class Americans who were well educated, restless, and highly idealistic. (92-93)<sup>2</sup>

None were recognised political activists. However, this overall characterisation of the Performance Group as apolitical belies the Movement experience of Richard Schechner prior to his work with the Performance Group in New York.

### Richard Schechner and the Free Southern Theater of New Orleans

Schechner was born into a Jewish family in Newark, New Jersey, in 1934. He grew up in the Weequahic section of Newark in what, by his own recollection, was a relatively affluent and unofficially segregated neighbourhood. His view of other ethnic groups, especially African Americans, was highly circumscribed up until this point (Schechner in Dent et al., 1969: 208). He graduated from Cornell University with a Bachelors degree in English (honours) in 1956 and received a Masters degree in English from the State University of Iowa in 1958. In September 1960 he moved to New Orleans to study for a PhD in theatre (on the work of Eugene Ionesco) at Tulane University, where he was appointed an assistant professor and became the editor of the *Tulane Drama Review* from 1962. He arrived in New Orleans during a period when civil rights issues were reaching a peak, particularly in regard to attempts at school desegregation and the riots that accompanied them. During these college years (and his drafting into the army for military service in 1958), he became involved in civil rights activities:

At college I was involved in some 'civil rights' activities and was very much for school integration. I interviewed Thurgood Marshall and wrote some stories about the Supreme Court case for the *Cornell Daily Sun*. Later, as a graduate student, an army private, and an assistant professor I was involved in demonstrations and sit-ins. I was arrested in the New Orleans mayor's office for 'refusing to move on' while protesting segregation. But during all that time, black people were 'them,' citizens whose cause was poignantly just. I was alienated from white culture but could not be part of black culture. There was little personal exchange between me and black people. Most of my friends were white and I felt separated from the very Movement I wished to help because of my whiteness, my Jewishness, and my relative wealth. (Schechner in Dent et al., 1969: 208-9)

His viewpoint changed in 1964 when he became involved, as a co-director with John O'Neal and Gilbert Moses, with the founding of the Free Southern Theater of New Orleans, a black theatre group which intended to work in the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama region as an emancipatory Movement theatre.<sup>3</sup> Schechner now found himself to be an ethnic minority within a group (and within an actual

<sup>2</sup> The core members were Remi Barclay, Sam Blazer, Jason Bosseau, Richard Dia, William Finley, Patrick McDermott, Joan MacIntosh, Margaret Ryan, William Shephard, Priscilla 'Ciel' Smith, and Vicky May Strang (Stage Manager). See Appendix A for listings of subsequent incarnations of the Performance Group. Shephard gives extensive information on the members of what he calls the 'Dionysus Group'. He identifies the following co-habiting pairs: Richard Schechner and Joan MacIntosh, Remi Barclay and Jason Bosseau, and Ciel Smith and Patrick McDermott. Shephard and Ryan had partners outside the group. Shephard interviewed most members of the group in the course of writing of the work. There do not appear to have been any other extended narratives by former group members from this early period.

<sup>3</sup> Schechner has always been most interested in directing, and has shown little by way of acting aspirations, unlike Julian Beck and Judith Malina of the Living Theatre, and R.G. Davis of the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

community whenever he visited O'Neal and Moses at their homes), and he found the experience intimidating:

The only thing I could talk about to these men was theater. It was the safe middle ground, something that brought us together. And so we talked about it. We wrote a program for the FST. [...] We would start a 'professional' theater in the South; we would perform for black audiences in the cities and the towns; we would tour; we would train artists. It was a mixture of the Movement, my own ideas about regional theater, and the confrontation among three different personalities. (210)

Although Schechner directed plays, for example Ossie Davis's *Purlie Victorious* in 1965, his role in the organisation was conceived principally as an administrator and he found the experience both contradictory and frustrating.<sup>4</sup> It was contradictory because of his position as a non-African American leader amongst African Americans in what was supposed to be a 'Black' emancipatory organisation. In the context of the Freedom Summer of 1964, and the mood of optimism in the South at the time, Schechner was circumspect:

Why were so many whites running the Movement? Why were 'local projects' led by so many 'outsiders'? Whose Movement was it anyway?

The FST was implicated in all this because we felt that we were part of the Movement. We were in the vanguard of the nonviolent strategy (SNCC once meant non-violence). The theater would say in art what the Movement had been saying in politics. Gandhi and Martin Luther King were right. Masses of people can be moved, and their love can change things. Experience was to prove us wrong, was already proving us wrong as we hammered out our program. (211)

The Free Southern Theater, in his view, failed to live up to this promise, as did many organisations of the period.

At a more personal level, he found his role in the theatre unsatisfactory:

Honestly, I did not want to be the organizer for the FST, its fund-raiser, its administrator. I wanted to direct plays. And therefore I was less than efficient in the pursuit of my assigned tasks. I was not South during Freedom Summer and I did not do my work North. I copped out. The contradictions between who I was and who the FST wanted me to be were very great. It was during 1963 and 1964 that my editorship of *TDR* had begun to bring me a reputation. I was not saintly enough to trade that in for \$35 a week and a theater of amateurs. I rationalized that I could best serve the FST from my Tulane position. Perhaps this was true. But there is no way to fudge my lack of work. I was simply not interested in fund-raising or administration. (214-15)

He pointed out, in mitigation, that no-one else in the Free Southern Theater was interested in the business side of the operation at this time. What is most important in this frank reflection is the clear indication that, in Schechner's mind at least, theatre comes before anything else. He wanted to direct theatre, and in a professional manner, even if not in the mold of a conventional professional theatre.

Schechner's active involvement with the Free Southern Theater ceased at the beginning of 1965, less than a year after he had joined. During that year he established the New Orleans Group with painter Franklin Adams and musician Paul Epstein. It was an avant-garde experimental theatre, run without any formal

<sup>4</sup> Schechner is described as an actor in a company listing of 1965 (Dent et al., 1969: 79)

connection to a college. This group existed for some two years, during which time it presented, amongst other things, a Happening-like event called *4/66*, inspired by John Cage, and Ionesco's *Victims of Duty* (1967). It dissolved when Schechner left Tulane University to take up a professorship in drama at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in June 1967.

Nevertheless, Schechner continued to correspond with current and former members of the Free Southern Theater for a number of years after his departure. Much of this correspondence concerned the integrity of theatre *qua* theatre and the shortcomings of the Free Southern Theater. For example, in March 1966 he wrote an impassioned letter to John O'Neal, who had also left by this stage (as had Gilbert Moses):

For me the FST should be (how horrible that moral 'should' reads!) an experimental theater: its art forms should be as audacious as its social setting. But the FST is just another little theater, black instead of white or taffy or brown or what-have-you. Another little theater looking for the usual kind of play: what will *our* audience like/dislike enough to like? But no artistic audacity. No experimentation with forms. And as a little theater the FST is not particularly successful: we do not really produce many plays; rehearsals are scattered, disrupted. Terrific energy is put in and not much comes out. (Schechner in Dent et al., 1969: 105)

Schechner was also disillusioned with the rhetoric of relevance to a constituency that he could not readily discern:

The FST is self-proclaimed all the way down the line; there is the danger of being sucked up by our own Madison Avenue publicity. 'Theater for those who have no theater,' 'black theater for black audiences,' 'get into the community.' We have endless slogans, and few workshops; a theater full of writers who write very little; actors who do not act much; a theater without performers. And community contact? (106)

He declared his own loyalty to theatre before anything else: 'certainly don't trust me. I finked out, and I'd fink out again. The only thing that I want to do in the theater is to write criticism, try to write plays, occasionally direct. The FST can offer me none of these things and deep down I'm no altruist willing to offer things out of love' (106)

Schechner concluded by indicting the three original founders, including himself, as poor leaders: 'Maybe that was the starting trouble: leaders who could not lead. Maybe now, after those leaderless leaders have vanished, those we so badly led will be able to lead themselves. Maybe. I doubt it. . . .' (107).

#### Schechner's first paradigm for a radical theatre group

Schechner's views on the necessity of leadership were more forcefully articulated in a subsequent communication. In July of 1966, in a letter to the incumbent Chair of the Board of the theatre, Tom Dent, Schechner outlined an operative plan for a theatre, shorn of some of the romantic notions of participatory democracy that in his view were plaguing the Free Southern Theater:

1. A group activity takes organization and structure;
2. Structure means leadership;
3. Leadership means 'democracy' can be used only at certain points – the democratic system is to 'follow the leader(s),' no matter how un-Utopian that sounds;
4. Art involves, as you say, the hard work of individuals *who give up their right* to say this or that immediately *in exchange for* saying it in their art;
5. The FST is a theater, and its political effects are just that – something that happens after, not something to be done for its own sake;
6. To be a theater means to submit to some discipline;
7. To solve the problems of being a theatre is to do something very important in the community
  - A. Showing art, and art that can be discussed and criticized and reacted to by the community;
  - A. Being a living thing, the presence of which *in itself*, is something this community, white and black, desperately needs. (Schechner in Dent et al., 1969: 122)

This is not to say that Schechner was without sympathy for participatory democracy in the mid-1960s. He has noted elsewhere that in broad terms participatory democracy is flawed but worthwhile, especially as a tool for helping people relate to each other and learn about the use and misuse of power (Schechner, 1973: 66). Fundamentally, however, he did not see participatory democracy as a paradigm for the theatre. Interestingly, Harold Clurman, when interviewed in the 1970s by Frederick Gaines about the structure of the Group Theatre during the 1930s, voiced similar misgivings about organising a theatre as a collective:

We never called ourselves a collective at all. We called ourselves a theatre, not a theatre collective. Because when I say theatre is a collective, it has nothing to do with what is normally thought of as a collective, as a cooperative. It has to do with the fact that the art itself is a collective. (Clurman qtd. in Gaines, 1982: 283)<sup>5</sup>

Clurman shares with Schechner a belief that theatre, by definition, is a collaborative, and therefore meaningfully collective, act. Yet it is one that cannot thrive without visionary leadership. When asked about theatre groups that attempt to function without a single leader, Clurman rejects the notion:

It doesn't apply. It doesn't apply, you see, because it's taking from one realm of thought into another where it doesn't apply. They're taking it from the idea of real democracy, local democracy, participatory . . . and that's fine, it's a beautiful thought, and we could well espouse it in certain situations, the small town, they could have it in old Athens . . . but it doesn't apply to art. Art is the work – I mean not only of one person – art is the work . . . There's always a certain amount of participation, no matter what because you've got a company of actors, you're really dependent upon their ability to carry out your ideas and without them, their participation, you're a lost man no matter how great a director you are. So it does happen but there still has to be a center, one strong person who has an idea, like the Grotowski theatre, like the Brecht theatre, like the Moscow Art Theatre. (303-4)

For Clurman, who is fully aware here of the participatory democratic ethos of the 1960s, the centre, in contrast to Weinberg's concept of the centre as a clearing-house of communications, in art at least, must be embodied by a person or personality. Similarly, Schechner, at this point in his career, seems to have found participatory democracy, to the degree that he had experienced it at all in the South, to be unsuitable for the theatre. The ideal group, for Schechner, is one that accepts hierarchy and the surrender of certain conventional speaking rights by its members. Overtly political content is relegated to secondary status

<sup>5</sup> These remarks, to my knowledge, remain unpublished elsewhere. Gaines includes the transcript of the interview as an appendix to his thesis.



while the necessity of discipline is fundamental. The theatre group fulfills its role in the community merely by trying hard to be a theatre.

The seventh point on Schechner's list, concerning the intrinsic merit to the community of a theatre that seeks 'to solve the problem of being a theatre', deserves comment. This view is consistent with the Living Theatre's credo in the late 1960s, articulated on several occasions by Julian Beck, that the theatre should be the embodiment of community:

I believe that the community is in some ways the most important aspect of our work. It's also the perhaps the least well realized, the least well perfected at the moment. It's more a concept than reality. We'd like this community to function truly like an anarchist society. (Beck qtd. in Biner, 1971: 163)

Beck is more specific than Schechner insofar as Beck talks of a particular type of community, but both reflect a view of the theatre group as functionally autonomous. The theatre serves the people through its existence, rather than having to answer directly to the people. The community may provide feedback to the theatre, principally in terms of its presence or absence as audience, but it does not authorise or control the theatre.

This raises a question concerning the source of legitimation for such an entity to be looked to as a paradigm of community. On the face of it, it appears that self-selection as an affinity group with a dedication to theatre is sufficient, or, if it is mediated at all, it is by an expert theatre leader rather than by a community leader or group of leaders. There is no prior vote from a constituent community. Presumably, approbation and censure are earned along the way, but there is an initial act of coming together that does not appear to depend on any traditional community decision-making structure, whether it be through hereditary entitlement, tribal council, or religious code. Goodwill alone is sufficient. The assumption seems to derive from intellectual thought alone.

It is easy to interpret this assumption as high-handed, especially with the benefit of hindsight and several decades of grass-roots community theatre work that has evolved more iteratively within particular communities. However, at the time, the role of the intellectual in American society, seemed fraught with contradictions. Schechner expressed his anguish in an essay entitled 'The Politics of Ecstasy':

The deepest frustration of a white radical like me is that I am powerless to change the social structure through any personal action. The 'acceptable modes' of protest are ineffectual and guerrilla war means an absolute rejection of whatever comforts I have attained. I am a professor, I have a fine apartment, I enjoy the open pleasures of women and the more or less open pleasures of pot. I run a small theatre which claims to be a 'guerrilla theatre,' but is in fact no such thing – just a radical theatre, moving ahead in exploring certain aspects of environmental staging. I earn from my teaching and writing about \$20,000 a year – a very comfortable living. I have had the fantasy of revolution beginning, crowds storming across Washington Square and entering my apartment building. . . .

And it probably won't be until the revolution reaches my door that I will make, irrevocably, the decision that my head tells me is right; right strategically and ethically. Until that

time, I write essays, direct plays, teach classes, sign statements, parade in demonstrations. (1969b: 210-11)

Schechner's dilemma is similar to that faced by R.G. Davis in the latter days of his involvement in the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Both were serious intellectuals at heart. They seemed to be caught up the question 'Where does the intellectual, or "tui", after Gramsci, and Brecht, respectively, properly belong in American society?' One could argue that Schechner's fundamental faith in the power of theatre, a faith shared equally by Judith Malina and Julian Beck, both of whom epitomised the American post-WWII intelligentsia, derives from a reflexive understanding of the dilemma of the 'traditional' intellectual in bourgeois society, and the limited choices available as 'organic' intellectuals. Theatre has a certain fluidity and a capacity for crossing social and cultural boundaries. Metaphors, parables and allegories help not only to present arguments but to pose problems for audiences as human beings and not just members of a particular class.

In the theatre, if party politics seemed too conflicted, perhaps potential for transcendence lay in pre-industrial and/or non-Western theatrical forms, forms that stressed ritual and communion rather than class analysis or an immediate historical, social, and political context. This is not to say that introspection, insularity, and an attraction to the idea of timeless ceremony was the only option for intellectuals. The San Francisco Mime Troupe sought to align itself with the New Left and Bay Area communities and it tried to address local social issues. The Living Theatre, although clearly attracted to intercultural ritual and ceremony, was often outward looking. It went on the road as a conspicuously non-materialist, i.e., financially impoverished travelling theatre, in order to escape the trappings of bourgeois intellectualism. Both groups struggled in the attempt to maintain a commitment to intellectual thinking whilst creating work in a climate of suspicion towards intellectualism.

In the case of the Performance Group, a more inward-looking turn does in fact seem to have been taken, at least in the first two years of its existence. Ironically, perhaps, the underlying paradigm it used for its enactment of community and for the creation of transcendent new rituals of communion, was an altogether angst-ridden dynamic, very similar to the basic assumption group proposed by W. R. Bion.

### **1967-69: The Performance Group as flight/fight entity**

As noted earlier, Schechner began work at New York University (NYU) in June 1967. His initial work with students of NYU involved street theatre. Sainer notes that Schechner was

involved in the staging of a guerrilla-warfare piece [October], simultaneously taking place at twenty-seven locations both in theatres and on the street. In November he began a workshop with some forty performers but in January of 1968, when he began work on *The Bacchae* of Euripides, the number of performers was down to fifteen. The company decided to call itself the Performance

Group<sup>6</sup>, and in March it moved to a garage on Wooster Street in lower Manhattan. (Sainer, 1997: 20)

The most significant event in the creation of the Performance Group was the visit by Polish theatre director and founder of the Polish Laboratory Theatre (Teatr Laboratorium), Jerzy Grotowski, along with one of his principal actors, Richard Cieslak, to New York during October and November of 1967. Schechner was instrumental in arranging workshops to be led by the pair at NYU. They ran a four-week (sometimes reported as five-week) course in which Schechner and a select few participated. Inspired by the event, Schechner then sought to carry on with Grotowski's approach with a new group that worked outside the confines of the university.

The lengthy rehearsal periods, sometimes more than a year, that became characteristic in the Performance Group, can be attributed in part to Grotowski's influence. Grotowski's view of theatre up to this time was that it was a holy pursuit, in which the ritual aspects in the performer-spectator relationship should be made explicit.<sup>7</sup> Of greatest significance, however, was Grotowski's focus on actor-training, which began with the Theatre of Thirteen Rows (1959-64) in Opole, Poland, and was carried over to the Teatr Laboratorium (also referred to officially as the 'Institute of Actor's Research') in Wrocław (1965-76). His views on the importance of the actor were clearly articulated in *Towards A Poor Theatre*, which was not published until 1968 (by Odin Teatret) and 1969 (by Methuen), although parts of it had appeared earlier, through fora such as *The Drama Review*, *Les Temps Moderne*, and other journals and periodicals.

Underpinning Grotowski's 'poor theatre' concept, a theatre stripped of diverting comforts, disguises, and distractions, in order to return to essential, unmediated communication between performer and spectator, is the notion of the actor as one who surrenders to a role as a psychically and physically naked being. Rather than analysing or making a character one's own, either by finding the motivation for that character, or by using idiosyncratic mannerisms and speech, the actor unlearns any 'tricks' in order to confront his or her role. Thus the focus is very much on the de-psychologising *via negativa*, or 'eradication of blocks' (Grotowski, 1991: 17), for the actor, with the physicalised *via positiva* being provided principally through rigorous exercises for the voice and body. The latter, under the influence of Artaud, are derived partly from yoga, Kathakali and Balinese theatre. More indirectly perhaps, Meyerhold's view of the actor as puppet, and the body as a machine of great kinetic potential, in which each part requires its own discipline and articulation, reinforced the idea of physicality.

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<sup>6</sup> William Shephard attributes the choice of name for the group, about which there was considerable debate in the first weeks of its existence, to Remi Barclay, who, when contacting municipal agencies in New York about permits to rehearse and perform in city parks, was asked for the group's name and came up with The Performance Group on the spot (Shephard, 1991: 52).

<sup>7</sup> There is often a distinction made between the Grotowski of the 1960s, and the Grotowski of the 1970s and 1980s, the latter period characterised more by explorations of the individual psychological self, rather than the physical self and there were fewer interrogations of collective rituals.

In creating a performance, the actor's training and energy is directed at the confrontation with what might be termed 'ur-myths', or what Grotowski calls 'representations collectives' (1991: 42).<sup>8</sup> These are transmitted through all cultures, and are approached by the actor with both 'fascination and excessive negation, acceptance and rejection' (42). Such confrontations are to be seen in the mature works of the Theatre of Thirteen Rows: Slowacki's *Kordian* (1962), Wyspianski's *Akropolis* (1962), and Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (1963). The Laboratory Theatre continued this interrogation of collective myths with Slowacki's adaptation of Calderon's *The Constant Prince* (1965), and *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris* (1968). The latter is noteworthy insofar as it was not based upon an existing textual source, but came from the actors:

In place of a dramatic text, the actors responded to a network of interwoven myths, historical events, literary fable and everyday occurrences, which formed in their totality a multi-level parable of the human race. But without the actors who performed it, it would have ceased to exist – for on one level it was drawn uniquely from the life-experiences of the actors involved, and the levels on which it operated were so completely interdependent that destruction of any single level would have resulted in the collapse of the whole. For most of the period of its creation there was no script as such: action was improvised, and speech as well where it was absolutely essential. Not until the action was crystallised were the actors asked to make a personal and individual search through literature for the texts to which they and their creation responded. (Kumiega, 1982: 197)

This process bears a superficial resemblance to the approaches taken by the Living Theatre in the creation of *Paradise Now* (1968) and the Performance Group's *Commune* (1970-71), and to a lesser extent *Dionysus in 69* (1968). However, the life experiences of the actors were related to a larger theme rather than to their individual psychological states. Furthermore, Grotowski was highly sceptical of any 'collective consciousness' in the present historical moment:

As soon as my practical awareness became conscious and when experiment led to a method, I was compelled to take a fresh look at the history of theatre in relation to other branches of knowledge, especially psychology and anthropology. A rational view of the problem of myth was called for. Then I saw clearly that myth was both a primeval situation, and a complex model with an independent existence in the psychology of social groups. [...] The theatre, when it was still part of religion, was already theatre: it liberated the spiritual energy of the congregation or tribe by incorporating myth and profaning or rather transcending it. [...] But today's situation is much different. As social groupings are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux, disappearing and being reincarnated. The spectators are more and more individuated in their relation to the myth as corporate truth or group model, and belief is often a matter of intellectual conviction. This means that it is much more difficult to elicit the sort of shock needed to get to those psychic layers behind the life-mask. Group identification with myth – the equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth – is virtually impossible today. (1991: 22-23)

This is not to say that Grotowski ignores the group aspects of theatre and ritual. His early works incorporated audience involvement, or at least moral implication of the audience, in the action. Spectators were placed in specific observational settings, bringing them closer to being witnesses and judges rather than passive observers. He retreated from this approach and the idea of performance as a 'meeting' in the mid-1960s, regarding it as unfairly manipulative, because actors and director were always ahead of the action and the audience, and controlled the meeting process, despite romantic notions of communion. The

<sup>8</sup> Grotowski does not explain how this terminology differs from 'collective representations', which social and cultural anthropologists often use to denote myths.

Performance Group went through a similar process of realisation. In *Dionysus in 69*, intimate audience participation was encouraged initially, and then curtailed because it could too easily become mutually exploitative. In *Makbeth* participation was limited to circulation within the performance space. In *Commune* it was judiciously reintroduced in particular sequences, for example, as a hostage dilemma to be negotiated by the audience between themselves, leaving some uncertainty as to the play's outcome, depending upon audience choice.

At a more fundamental level, the degree to which the theatre of Grotowski, as developed in Poland, could ever be transposed into the American context was, and is, something of an open question. Grotowski clearly appealed to American theatre theorists and practitioners such as Schechner on aesthetic grounds. However, the state-funded financial security enjoyed at that time by Grotowski was not available in the same form in the United States. A monolithic party machinery and bureaucracy in Poland (albeit once removed from Soviet Party headquarters in Moscow) could, in principle, directly limit the artistic choices of Grotowski's group. Yet it also fed and clothed the Polish Laboratory Theatre. This arguably gave it a distinct advantage in terms of group cohesion. Apart from a single leader-director figure it also had a superordinate authority to blame for some, if not all, of its problems. It also had the immediate proximity of the Holocaust and centuries of European history to which to refer as lived experience.

In the case of the Performance Group, neither Broadway, Off-Broadway, regional, nor university institutions, let alone Federal sources offered any prospects for nurturing a radical experimental theatre. Schechner had to raise a personal loan of \$5,000 to launch and sustain an experimental theatre in New York for the first six months of its existence. And while the group clearly seems to have benefited from his connections as a college professor, and his financial and managerial shrewdness, this is not comparable to official state funding and recognition. This created a powerful pressure to deliver from within, but one mitigated by the fact that there was no accountability to outside political masters or to a discrete constituency.

Similarly, there was an apparent lack of a usable past. American cultural consciousness, if one follows Fitzgerald (1986) and other commentators, is characterised by a type of historical amnesia. Writing about four otherwise disparate communities founded in the United States in the 1970s, with clearly differing intentional, religious, and 'lifestyle' goals, Fitzgerald sees an American tradition of the anti-tradition:

In the first place, the people who joined such groups had the extraordinary notion that they could start all over again from scratch. Uncomfortable with, or simply careless of, their own personal histories and their family traditions, they thought they could shuck them off and make new lives, new families, even new societies. They aimed to reinvent themselves. From a European perspective this was an absurd enterprise. (23)

In her view this American propensity for radical reinvention took a new turn in the 1960s, as the focus shifted from self-reinvention by the rugged individual to collective reinvention by groups in post-WWII America:

That individuals could start over again, and if necessary reinvent themselves, was one of the great legends of American life. It was the stuff of self-improvement manuals, generation after generation, and the attempt was a major theme in American literature. But the American attempt to start over again in groups or en masse was not a theme so well explored. (13)

Whalen and Flacks (1991), in an assessment of the afterlife of 60s student activism, note the unique challenge faced by politicised movements, such as the New Left, in trying to inculcate the idea of participatory democracy. They see a tension between 'making history versus making life':

The mainstream American definition of freedom emphasizes liberty as the ultimate value – the opportunity for each person to make his or her own life as freely as possible. Such a perspective says that the good society is one in which its members live largely removed from history, for history is an area or realm in which decisions are made and actions taken that can powerfully influence and shape the conditions and terms of everyday life in society. Liberty imagines that history can be escaped. (9)

This uncertainty about history and the ambiguities concerning the class position of intellectuals in American society, while affording a certain conceptual freedom, also created a vacuum, one that seems to have too easily defaulted to psychological introspection. Assisted by Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *One-Dimensional Man* (1955), and works by Philip Slater and R.D. Laing and others, and using popularised Freudian concepts, such as the father figure, the love object and murderous impulses relating to the 'death instinct', it is not difficult to imagine that the underlying countercultural idea of the group was often that of the patriarchal family.

Indeed, Grotowski, after encountering American radical theatres at first hand in the late 1960s, detected a fundamental tendency towards making the theatre group a primarily social-emotional entity, as Bigsby notes (1985: 124-25). According to Croyden:

He [Grotowski] felt that the Americans' addiction to groupism was their downfall, not a contribution – they looked for security in the group because they had none of their own, and that this led to undisciplined work and false assumptions. The actors pretend to be a family, but a director is not a father, a fellow actor is not a lover, and there is no reason to pretend otherwise. These groups are emblems of a banal sentimentality which is irrelevant to creative work. Grouping mixes sociability with art, personal problems with professional ones, intimacies with privacies, and as a result artistic work is corrupted. (qtd. in Munk and Coco, 1969: 179)

Grotowski also denigrated the bandwagon-jumping (yoga, drugs, sensitivity groups) and guru-worshipping tendencies in American theatre groups.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, if Croyden's reportage is accurate, he dismissed all radical American theatre groups except Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre. This dismissal includes the Living Theatre and the Performance Group, although he was on good terms personally with the founders of both theatres. When he saw performances by the two groups he had little enthusiasm for what they did, remarking, for

<sup>9</sup> Grotowski himself became something of a guru figure, particularly in America.

example, that what he liked most about *Dionysus in 69* was the set (Shephard, 1991: 175) and that they should decide whether to be fully naked or fully clothed but they should not opt for half-measures.<sup>10</sup>

Grotowski's views on theatre had other influences on the Performance Group over the course of the next three years. Rehearsals were often hermetically sealed from the outside world. Canonical texts or narratives were used as source material. To this extent the choice of a classic work such as Euripides' *The Bacchae* was unsurprising. Schechner believed that the text, when modified, could speak powerfully to the present.

### The milieu of *Dionysus in 69*: flight into therapy and ecstasy

Schechner wrote his 'Politics of Ecstasy' essay while rehearsals on *Dionysus in 69* were underway. In it he argues for theatre as a medium for a kind of trans-historical politics, and he outlines the way in which a classical work, here *The Bacchae*, can be adapted to join it to the current social context:

We are now returning to an older tradition.

The older tradition is political in the widest sense. It cannot be created outside of a group, a community; and it cannot function without direct reference to the society in which it is embedded. It does not ignore the repertory, but neither does it 'express' it. Performance uses the repertory – as material from which to construct new artworks. The Performance Group is now working on a production of Euripides' *The Bacchae* that treats the text as if it were part of an oral tradition. The play will be performed in a large environmentally articulated space. Only parts of Euripides's text will be used, and these parts will be joined to and set against fragments of other texts. The event will be a dance, an ecstasy, and the audience will perform along with the members of the Group. Our Bacchanale will not be completely celebratory: that would not be true to our social context. We hope to explore the 'politics of ecstasy' which is so important to many young people today. (1969b: 228)

The adaptation of *The Bacchae* was christened 'Dionysus in 69' as a pun on politics, particularly the 'Nixon in '68' slogan, and the sexual revolution (Shephard, 1991: 94). The rehearsal period took some six months, starting in January 1968 until the opening night in June. There was a deliberate policy of gradual unveiling, in the form of 'open rehearsals' from May 1968, where student classes were brought in to watch and participate, under relatively strict rules, or members of the public could attend, at a charge of \$1.50, subject to the same rules. Immediately, after an open rehearsal, or at a point of interruption specified by Schechner, discussions between attendees and performers took place, in what was essentially a focus group exercise. The feedback was used to improve performance. In this sense the approach was outward-looking and involved a community, albeit a largely intellectual one.

However, when the structure and content of *Dionysus in 69* was complete, it was something of a moot point whether or not the play was as true, in an intelligible sense, to the social context as Schechner had promised. (An outline of the play's structure is set out in Figure 6.1 on page 196)

<sup>10</sup> The group introduced nakedness to sections of *Dionysus in 69* in November 1968 (Schechner, 1970c: 52).

Figure 6.1 The structure of *Dionysus in 69**Dionysus in 69* (1968)

Euripides' text deals with the battle between Pentheus, King of Thebes and Apollonian ruler on the one hand, and Dionysus the god, celebrant of sensual pleasures, and his ritual followers on the other. It is the contest between order and chaos. In the Performance Group adaptation, Pentheus spies upon Dionysus and his Bacchantes and attempts to assert his authority and halt the revelry and debauchery. Dionysus challenges and humiliates Pentheus, who is condemned to die ceremonially. The King is anointed, caressed lovingly by female Bacchantes, and then torn limb from limb.

The structure of the work is broadly as follows (there were many changes and variations over the course of 18 months):

1. psychophysical warm-ups and exercises by actors, fragments of chorus are sung
2. audience admitted singly and ushered to seats by male performers
3. female performers continue exercises and begin singing as Chorus; Cadmus/Tiresias dialogue
4. when all are assembled Dionysus makes a speech about his origins and proclaims his Divinity
5. the Birth Ritual begins, out of which Dionysus is born – he passes through a birth canal made from the other male performers' bodies lying tightly packed in a row on the floor with the women standing over the men, feet astride. They pass Dionysus through the canal with hands, body movements, and sounds (based on an Asmat tribal adoption ritual).
6. the Ecstasy Dance takes place – singing and dancing of a tribal sort that often involves the audience
7. Pentheus, who has been observing the activities, draws the performers into a circle and makes a speech demanding obedience to his authority
8. the first contest between Dionysus and Pentheus – Dionysus is imprisoned
9. Dionysus, enraged, escapes, determined to humiliate Pentheus; performers confront each other with personal questions as in a group encounter session; eventually they turn on Pentheus, who is attacked, as the actor playing the role, in very personal and demeaning terms
10. Dionysus taunts Pentheus; Pentheus seeks the comfort of a female member of the audience – if she accepts him the play is over (he is almost always rejected)
11. Dionysus forces Pentheus to submit to him and imprisons him
12. Chorus speech leading into Total Caress, in which audience members are caressed gently and individually by Chorus sometimes leading to a larger of caressing bodies being created (later replaced by a more restrained 'moiety dance')
13. Dionysus teaches Pentheus to dance and prepares him for sacrifice
14. Dionysus incites Agave, Pentheus' mother into a Bacchic frenzy; what starts as a cress of Pentheus becomes a savage animal chase in which he is hunted down and killed by Agave and other frenzied Bacchantes
15. A Death Ritual takes place, which is a reverse of the Birth Ritual – Pentheus goes through the canal to his death; the women's hands are smeared with blood
16. Agave and Cadmus lament; Dionysus puts a curse on those present
17. Dionysus makes a campaign speech; the audience is escorted from the Performing Garage into the street
18. in more or less ritual style the performers clean up the performance space, themselves, and return to the profane world

(NB. I have constructed the above from several sources, including Schechner (1970c; 1973), Croyden (1974) and Lichti (1986). The sequence of events was often changed and alternate scenes substituted, making it virtually impossible to give a definitive version of the action.)

Material not taken from Euripides' text was comprised largely of autobiography and self-confession from, or confrontational exchanges between group members. There was an ecstasy dance and a group caress, both involving the audience. The caress was replaced by a less sexual 'moiety dance' when it became evident that some male audience members went too far if given the opportunity:

On one particular occasion one of the women--Margaret, I believe--was extremely upset after a performance. I hadn't noticed anything amiss during the show; so I was somewhat baffled by the strength of her emotion. It seemed that she was angry and upset over something that had happened during the ecstasy dance in honor of Dionysus. After taking his clothes off and joining the dance, an elderly man had become sexually aroused and ejaculated on Margaret's leg. At the time, the incident passed without causing a disruption of the performance. Afterward, however, Margaret was beside herself, crying and shouting to the rest of us that she hadn't joined the Group 'to be fucked by some man under a tower!' (Shephard, 1991:223)



All of these events Schechner termed 'actuals', or interpolations of the real temporal moment. Actors played games of wits, sought each other's personal emotional Achilles' heels, and physically challenged each other, as if the group experience was essentially one that threatened the safety of the individual but was also necessary for personal growth. Relief was provided by way of ecstasy dance, total caress, and other harmonious moments. Shephard, who played Pentheus for most of the play's run over twelve months, describes the working philosophy at that time:

From the beginning of our work together, Schechner had stressed the personal relationship between the actor and the actor's work. Influenced by such diverse philosophies as those expressed in the work of Grotowski, Gestalt psychology, encounter-group therapy, and the writings of R.D. Laing, Schechner gradually formulated a concept of the 'personal' actor who used the role to reveal the conflicts in his or her own life. In addition, he felt that the actor's confession or revelation of self should be articulated into the structure of the performance, not merely through the character but also the person of the actor. (1991: 89)

That the actors took this proposition of the personal actor seriously is beyond doubt. Shephard's narrative account of what he calls 'The Dionysus Group', and the testimonies of performers contained in the heavily illustrated 'text' of *Dionysus in 69* (Schechner, 1970c), confirm that there was a strong sense of a performative challenge. The benefits to the audience in watching the actors being 'true to their social context' were less clear. Croyden commented:

When the actors in *Dionysus* created their physical configurations basic on specific primitive rites, the result was arresting and visually powerful. But whenever they used colloquial equivalences – for example, the actors' interjecting their own language as a response to the outlines of the Euripides tale – the result was weak. So was the use of 'actuals.' The performers interrupted the action of the Euripides-based text and departed from their assigned roles in order to give their biographies, to free-associate, play games, address the audience, improvise, and interact with each other. This, one assumes, was done to express themselves and the text simultaneously. But the mixture created a sense of confusion; the result was a hodge-podge that offered neither a sense of social or aesthetic significance. (1974: 202)

Similarly, Oscar Brockett struggled to see the logic of the work:

Few of Euripides' original lines were heard by the audience (although they may have been spoken), for the overall impression was of multiple actions (some of them invisible to many spectators) occurring in various parts of the theatre. Effects were gained not through traditional means but through an accumulation of vocal sound (grunts, cries, moans, whispers) and mass action, varying from the quiet to the frenetic, from the ecstatic to the orgiastic, culminating in simulated ritualistic murder. Schechner seems to have had the theories of Artaud and Grotowski in mind, as well as those of Timothy Leary about mind-expanding drugs. Thus, Schechner intermingled many present-day interests with the original classical text to create a wholly new work. (1971: 141)

Others saw it in simpler terms. Reviewer Elenore Lester regarded it as a regrettable misrepresentation of Grotowski's theories:

Schechner's current production of 'Dionysus in 69', a contemporary take-off on Euripides's 'The Bacchae,' follows the Grotowski idea that the classics should be freely appropriated by modern actors and directors for their own uses. The strange acting techniques in 'Dionysus' also follow Grotowski's idea that the actor should shift between his real self and his role and that he should change roles and styles rapidly during the performance. However, it is inevitable that the intense,

highly-disciplined Grotowski theater of ultimate confrontation should undergo dilution in the hands of a group of American kids whose basic philosophic stance is the holiness of Do Your Own Thing. (1968: 3)

Her views here are consistent with those of Grotowski himself. However, while Lester attributes the shortcomings of the Performance Group to a youthful 'anything goes' lack of discipline, this belies the intensity and discipline with which the Performance Group approached its work. The key difference seems to lie in the conception of 'real self', which was almost certainly more than a loose notion of hedonistic individualism in the minds of the performers. Nevertheless the real self seems to have been intercepted by self-analysis before it could emerge as a transparent social self. The actors of the Polish Laboratory, however far they were from the Polish Communist Party in their views, were still working, at that point in history, from within a socialist social paradigm, not an individualist one. In other words, being one's 'real self' in Grotowskian terms was easier for the Polish actor, because the Polish actor was working in terms of self as a 'me' rather than an 'I'.

There appears to have been a fundamental tension between the Performance Group's idea of the group as a site for personal therapy, and the ideal of the group as the embodiment and agent of *communitas*.

Shephard's 250-page account of the 'Dionysus Group' experience suggests that the idea quickly came to dominate the ideal. Much of the narrative revolves around group members' attitudes to Schechner as leader, attempts to curry favour with him, and the eventual revolts or departures when he failed to live up to group expectations. Shephard's description of events, and his own detailed interpretation of the motivations of group members, himself included, is steeped in Freudian theory. And although Shephard does not mention Bion in his recourse to psychoanalytic theory, what he describes strongly connotes Bion's basic assumption group:

The unusual way in which the Group, as a collective body or organism, began to exercise certain prerogatives of the director in a traditional sense. Schechner responded to the increasing pressures of leadership by withdrawing from exclusive control of the production. The group's ongoing use of the democratic process in its decision-making gave Schechner the option of redirecting the Group's interpersonal friction back upon itself so that he, alone, could not be held responsible for the failure or success of the project. In this way, the Group was forced to rely upon its collective strength rather than making the director a hero or villain, depending on his choices. We still relied on Schechner's comprehensive view of the project, and we looked to him for emotional and moral support in the relative darkness of our untried state. (1991: 88)

Schechner was without doubt the leading figure in the group. He financed it himself, at least initially, and he had strong views on both the necessity of leadership and a substantially circumscribed form of democracy in any serious theatre group. On the other hand, he was extremely diffident about his own leadership, creating a kind of oscillation between assertion and withdrawal, especially as the group began to take on its own organic identity. Group members, although often divided about matters such as the casting of roles, tours, and publicity moves, were united, initially at least in Shephard's view, by the fear of failure in public.

Schechner's behaviour could be seen as manipulative, helpless, or a mixture of both. He was either subtly controlling the group or he was out of his depth. Schechner himself expressed concerns along these lines. However, it is important to remember the historical context. A preoccupation with revealing the self, and with discarding social roles was widespread, as if in unconscious reply to Goffman's image of a role-laden society rife with dissembling performances. The systematic breaking of the theatrical frame in society was an important project in itself, and to a certain extent, it did not matter so much how it was executed as long as it was carried out with conviction. This enthusiasm for interrogating roles may account for some of the structurelessness of the Performance Group as a group, even though Schechner, at least, had a fundamental belief that a hierarchical structure was necessary for a theatre group to make powerful work.

#### Participation: *Dionysus in 69* as an existential *communitas* event

The other factor that was linked to the search for the role-free authentic individual was the belief in communal experience and rites of existential *communitas* as an antidote to alienated individualism.

However, as Croyden notes, the communal experience requires some common reference points:

Attempts at ritual seem less successful when actors and audience share no common ground. In actual fact, ritual has always had a moral, religious, practical, or psychological significance, and has never existed for its own sake. Rites were a need. Spring meant a rebirth of the crops and food, a relief from the darkness of the winter; thus rites often accompanied the change of season. Rites helped primitive people to overcome the mysteries of the universe; their dances and ceremonies were offerings to the mysterious elements, in exchange for survival. (1974: 203)

Her remarks, directed principally at the Performance group's *Dionysus in 69*, apply equally, indeed arguably more so, to the 'Orientalist' smorgasbord of rites delivered by the Living Theatre in *Paradise Now*, notwithstanding the fact that Orientalism was *de rigueur* within many parts of the counterculture at the time.<sup>11</sup> In *Paradise Now* the audience often had very little time to prepare for participation, even if they considered themselves to be 'hip to' the countercultural fashion of spontaneity and free expression at the time. They were confronted with a dizzying sequence of decontextualised or abridged ceremonies or practices appropriated from other cultures. Interestingly, by contrast, the San Francisco Diggers linked many of their public rites and ceremonies to changes in the seasons or calendar events familiar to most members of the immediate community (e.g., Halloween).

This is not to say that young middle class Americans responded to works such as *Dionysus in 69* and *Paradise Now* as negatively as many critics seem to have done. Schechner notes with some satisfaction:

The Performance Group began in November, 1967, and *Dionysus in 69* opened in June, 1968. It was a critical success, getting a very, very good review in the *New York Times*. Then a lot of people attacked it, but they attacked it in such a way that people came to see it. So, a group that had not done any professional performing, a director who had not directed in New York before

<sup>11</sup> See Stephens (1998), especially Chapter Three, *Consuming India* (48-73). Also, see Bharucha (1993), who takes issue with Schechner directly in relation to 'interculturalism'.

(although I had directed in other places), a group whose average age was around 24 or 25, found itself in the midst of an immense commercial success. (1978: vi)

It is clear that one of the main attractions was the level of audience participation available in the performance: 'In *Dionysus* the audience is free to sit anywhere and invited to move around the environment. One scene is a dance with the audience. Spectators frequently join in the action at various times during a night's performance' (Schechner, 1973: 4).

However, although audience members were generally quick to join in, their expectations were often disconcerting: 'Underlying much participation in *Dionysus* was the wish of the spectators to get close to the group. Many spectators thought TPG was a community, even a religious community. Audiences did not want to think of *Dionysus in 69* as 'just a play'' (42-43).

Shephard noticed a similar tendency when *Dionysus* was toured through colleges:

Several students asked us if those of us in the Group lived together in a commune, slept with each other freely, and so forth. In general, the Group was perceived by many as an ideal collective united by bonds of love and deep commitment. I took no pains to disabuse these notions; at the same time I gave them no support. I couldn't adequately describe the bonds which united us. (1991: 192)

Indeed, if Schechner is correct, the misleading impression of the Performance Group as a primary or kin group reached the point where the work created a counterproductive effect. The liminoid aspects of performance (the promise of *communitas*) far outstripped the capacity to carry it back intact to existing society:

The performance was often trans-theatrical in a way that could not last, because American society in 1969 was not actually communal. *Dionysus* was overwhelming to the degree that audiences believed it was not a play and found that belief confirmed by the Group. [...] Participation and belief supported each other – on any given night the strength of feeling created by joining participation to belief could be such that everything else was swept away. (Schechner, 1973: 43)

Theatre critics, by contrast, were much more sceptical about the virtues of participation:

In 'Dionysus in 69' members of the audience are pulled on stage for an esoteric group grope, presumably intended to create a state of sympathetic excitation that would, under perfect conditions, move everyone to rush on stage and join the orgy, much as earlier in the play the audience came on stage and joined the rock dancing, initiated by Dionysus. After that much involvement, surely the next step must be the programmed rape of the audience by the actors – or perhaps vice versa. (Lester, 1968: 2)

Critics like Lahr were more concerned about the insidious and paradoxical effects upon theatre as a whole as a result of participation. Instead of making people more outward looking, in his view, participation encouraged introspection and inwardness:

The 'group grope' not only wants to affirm the body, but relax the performer (and audience) into a fuller sense of identity in which the senses are activated by new use, instead of dulled by conventional response. The experiments at the Esalen Institute at Big Sur . . . parallel the instincts

and ideas of these seminal theater experiments. The effect of free-form theatrical experience is to change the dimension of the theater from what was once public and popular to something private and individual. (Lahr, 1970b: 17)

The most thoroughgoing outside critique of *Dionysus* came from Stefan Brecht, who worried less about the psycho-therapeutic aspects of the work. It is clear from his 13-page review in a *TDR* issue in Spring 1969 that he saw the production a number of times across a period of several months and that it posed significant intellectual and political questions for him. Brecht takes the ritual aspects of the work seriously, acknowledging that there is logic in its structure and its use of nakedness, which he does not see as gratuitous. He finds a plausible dramaturgical meaning in the opening sequences of the production:

Individual gymnastics, each gymnast sole, randomly distributed. Their relentless contortions get them into a sweat - physical translations of introspection. Here and there a little acrobatics, action.

From this laborious anarchy the play powerfully emerges on a natural free rhythm. Couples form, the chance proximities of gymnasts turn into the interactions of performers. The timing of several trigger actions cuing others. Progressively assembling the play has been left up to the individual performers. Barely audible, mumbled chanted lines from a translation of Euripides sound out here and there, are repeated, taken over by others. Though they belong to parts they are not the property of any individual actor. (Brecht, 1969a: 156)

For Brecht, the fundamental problem with the work is that it is insufficiently unequivocal in regard to what he calls the 'pro-hip/anti-hip' libertarian dilemma of countercultural and New Left politics:

Frightened by the increasing orientation of the Left toward power, violence and discipline (interpreted as generically Dionysiac and as shared with fascism), the Group decided to put on a show combining the endorsement of libertarianism with a warning against wildness. Ideologically, this identification of serious and militant leftism with fascism (by way of confusing it with the hip and identifying aspects of the hip with fascism – an identification of libertarian with repressive violence, of libertarian with repressive organization) is an apology for not committing oneself to revolution against repressions experienced as insufferable. (168)

This inability to commit makes the bracketing of the work with an organic coming together at the start and a parade into the streets at the end unconvincing in Brecht's view. Similarly, the engagements with the audience are too ambiguous. Ultimately, the audience is left stranded by the Group while actors return to their own action and pre-occupations.

In essence, then, *Dionysus in 69* was aesthetically powerful but philosophically weak for Brecht. One can rephrase his critique in terms of Bion's basic assumption tendencies in groups and the paradox of ultrademocracy: any group experience poses a threat to the individual and the absence of an explicit hierarchy can intensify rather than reduce anxiety. Interestingly, this anxiety appears to have been carried over into subsequent Performance Group productions.

Yet, perhaps sensing that it had overreached itself somehow, the Performance Group retreated from audience participation in *Dionysus* relatively rapidly, focussing instead, via actual group therapy, on itself as a troubled community:

TPG was not, then, to become a community. And the basis for audience participation changed because the Group could not survive intact as a function of the audience's fantasies. During the winter of 1968-1969 the Group began weekly encounter therapy sessions guided by professional therapists. These sessions helped members recognize that the Group was not a community, nor did it seem headed in that direction. Certain irresolvable conflicts surfaced, and irreconcilable differences emerged. One member called these therapy sessions 'weekly tear and mucous meetings'. As members got deeper into group therapy, the therapeutic scenes in *Dionysus* were modified and finally dropped. Participation grew tamer and more predictable. [...] By the time *Dionysus in 69* closed at the end of July, 1969, most of the performers had had it with participation. (Schechner, 1973: 44)

Indeed, the group therapy process aspects of the Performance Group started in *Dionysus in 69* seem to have quickly overtaken the performance of the group as a theatre group. In a sense, they created and acted out what they unconsciously expected to find in the group, the drama of the patriarchal family. Bigsby has noted that the crucial messenger speech in the play, which defines the conflict between Dionysus and Pentheus, frames this in terms of a struggle between 'the id and the ego, the battle between freedom and authority.' (1985: 128-29)

Off-stage, one of the first major dramatic moments occurred when the father of the group temporarily abandoned the family. Schechner told the actors three weeks before the opening of *Dionysus in 69* that he would be away for much of the opening season. This engendered anxiety and resentment, according to Shephard (1991: 120). Schechner, upon his return, attributed some of this resentment to what he saw as an unravelling of discipline:

Another factor that's important as background is that *Dionysus* opened on June 6 and I left the country June 10 on a trip that I had arranged before the Performance Group existed. It was fate stepping in. I was gone from June 10 through to the time that *Dionysus* took a vacation at the end of July. I didn't get back to the group until September and a large number of the disciplines that we had worked on through the spring and a large sense of the rapport between the director and the performers were shot because the play opened, was a success, and the others in the group ran it for the eight weeks that I was gone. It changed the tone of how we began our work again in the fall. (1978: vi)

#### The milieu of *Macbeth*: mortal combat

The change in tone was not immediately apparent. In principle, at least, the decision to base a production around Shakespeare's *Macbeth* seems to have been relatively uncontroversial. Shakespeare and other classical texts could be used to comment on state brutality: 'We began discussion of a new piece and we decided we wanted to do something on fascism in the United States. The Democratic Convention of 1968 in Chicago affected many members of the Group very deeply' (Schechner, 1978: vi-vii).

Schechner and Performance Group member Joan McIntosh were in Mexico during the Democratic Convention,<sup>12</sup> but followed events in America and had been affected by the brutality shown by police to Mexican students that were protesting during the Olympic Games in Mexico City. Schechner suggested a combination of existing sources:

I was very interested in the theory of collage, and I thought we might put together Brecht's *Arturo Ui* and *Macbeth* or Jarry's *Ubu Roi* and *Macbeth* because both *Arturo* and *Ubu* are really modeled on *Macbeth*. [...] While we talked about *Ubu*, I brought in *Macbeth* and said 'Why don't we explore *Macbeth* as it's a play in our own language, is very strong, and deals with the problems we've been talking about? Later we can work on combining *Ubu* and *Macbeth*.' (NB. Schechner toyed with 'MacUbu' as a title). We never, of course, got to put them together. (1978: vii)

Work on *Macbeth* began in October 1968, only a few months after *Dionysus in 69* had opened: 'We did a lot of exercises about prophesy, laying on hands, witchcraft. We took the text apart and reassembled it in funny ways. We tried to find the main threads of action from both an individual and a group point of view.' (Schechner, 1973: 26). As with Euripides' *The Bacchae*, the classic text was a starting point. Schechner divides the initial working phases of the *mise-en-scène* as follows:

1. October, 1968-February, 1969 Improvisations without keeping to Shakespeare's text. Search for basic actions. . . .
2. March-June 1969. Making of scenes not in Shakespeare. These expressed some actual situations in the Group. Using Shakespeare's text as raw material. Demystifying Shakespeare. First character groupings: Dark Powers, Founders, Doers, Avengers.
3. July-August 1969. Cast assignments. Decisions about the shape of the space, the nature of the music. Much work with Rojo and Epstein. End of group workshops. I worked alone assembling what we had into a coherent script. (26)

In the midst of this process (December 1968) Schechner wrote a note to the group entitled 'On Rules & The Withering Away of the Director' (Performance Group, NYPL, MWEZ 23,450). It was a guarded justification for rules in the group working process and its title was derived from Beck and Malina's frequent avowals around that time that, ideally, theatre should function without leadership figures.

One of the main means of interpreting the text was to give each performer a strip of action to develop as an 'antiphonal'. The individual performer interpreted a part of the text and then dictated how that part was to be played out. The other performers had to respond creatively to the instructions:

We used the antiphonals to explore things about the play and about ourselves as a group and individually. At their best they reached a very high pitch of creativity, when there was a real balance and tension between what individual performers felt about the play and what they were able to express in their own language, which was both verbal and physical. At their worst, they deteriorated into a literary exercise, when the performers tried simply to use the lines of the play, forcing the exercise into a structure or a form that was not organic to it. (Schechner, 1978: xi)

Such an approach places a great deal of pressure on the performers, especially when working with an established and respected dramatic text. Furthermore, it was not a conventional collaborative approach. The group could have approached textual deconstruction and reconstruction in the manner typically used by the

<sup>12</sup> McIntosh and Schechner were a co-habiting pair at the time of formation of the group. They married in April 1970.

San Francisco Mime Troupe: research the text and recent American history and discuss them collectively. Instead, labour was individualised. This individualisation extended to the way in which the audience was meant to interact with the set, as Brockett has noted:

...all the actors were dressed in gym suits and moved constantly as if on a race track. To enter the theatre, one had to pass through a maze composed largely of mirrors which forced the spectator to come face to face with himself, while on the mirror above his head certain of Macbeth's key speeches were printed so that when the spectator looked at himself he also had to read the speeches. In this and other ways, the point was made that in the race of life we tend to tread others underfoot in order to get ahead. Although we may not resort to murder, as does MacBeth, we tend nevertheless to be consumed by ambition, as he is. Thus, we are supposed to see that we too are MacBeth. (1971: 142)

Beyond this, audience participation in *Makbeth* was in fact almost entirely absent. The seating arrangements forced the spectators to perch in positions where they could not see all the action.

Apart from the difficulties experienced with the text, the performance environment itself was problematic: 'The big mistake with *Makbeth* was that we rehearsed it in Baocic [Yugoslavia], and the space-field of that outdoor meadow stayed with us. It was impossible to work effectively in the Garage environment' (Schechner, 1973: 27). One could argue that insufficient time to come to terms with a set is a standard problem in theatre. Most productions involve last-minute construction of elaborate sets and most performers would expect such conditions. The San Francisco Mime Troupe, for example, routinely switched between indoor and outdoor locations. Admittedly, the outdoor locations were necessarily more 'home turf' than a meadow in Yugoslavia, but the Mime Troupe claimed to be content to play anywhere where an audience would congregate, not favouring one particular park, for example. Similarly, although overall the majority of Living Theatre venues seem to have been theatre spaces, they appear to have taken differing performance conditions from one place to the other very much in their stride. The key difference with the Performance Group was that the group took the surrounding environment to be central to the creation of a work. There was nothing incidental about it. With this in mind it is not surprising that the work did not relocate well.

In positive terms, perhaps, the 'failure' of *Makbeth* reflects the degree to which the group had adapted to their home environment. In any case, this impediment was exacerbated by what Schechner saw as the inherent malice in the group dynamic at the time:

What happened during the month's rehearsals in Baocic was that the performers developed the action according to the space-field there while Rojo built from what he perceived from workshops. The space-field of Baocic contradicted the space-field of Rojo's environment. Disunity within the Group made it impossible to overcome or live with this contradiction.[...] Rojo's environment had one supreme quality: It incorporated the tensions he sensed in the Group, conflicts that led to the dissolution of TPG in 1970. The rehearsals of *Makbeth* coincided with the undoing of the group. Daily, heavy personal things came down, and though no one said so out loud, I think we each knew that *Makbeth* was our last play together. Because of the way TPG works, our conflicts fed into the structure of *Makbeth*. It became an angry play of blood, power struggles, betrayals, fleeting contacts, brief flashes of quiet punctuated by screams. All of this is in Shakespeare's



script. It also characterized the environment. Gone were the soft carpets and suffused lighting of *Dionysus* replaced by a concrete floor, bare wood platforms framed by iron piping, lighting that came in fitful bursts. The bare feet of *Dionysus* gave way to boxing shoes, nakedness to unisex costumes of crushed corduroy. (1973: 28-29)

*Makbeth* premiered in December 1969, over a year after work on it began. (There were minor changes in the composition of the Performance Group between *Dionysus in 69* and *Makbeth*) As with the first play, there were open rehearsals a month prior to the official opening. The season ran for less than a month. Houses were extremely poor. Reviews were mixed. Julius Novick's (1970) review was supportive, as was that by John Lahr (1969). Walter Kerr's review in *The New York Times* (1969) was scathing. Arthur Sainer's *Village Voice* (1970) article treated the performance sympathetically.

All in all, however, *Makbeth* was acknowledged as a failure. The atmosphere of communion and group work surrounding *Dionysus in 69*, however problematic, was absent in *Makbeth*. In January 1970 as the play closed, there were legal threats and public statements about control of the Performance Group, which split into two factions in the aftermath of *Makbeth*. One faction occupied the theatre on Schechner's condition that it was given occupancy until September 1, 1970, or until it failed to pay the rent, whichever came first.

#### The Performance Group as dysfunctional family

Difficulties with Rojo's set and interpersonal relations in the group notwithstanding, the principal reason for this crisis, as Schechner himself has candidly confessed, was the director's desperate attempt to assert his authority as leader. Behind the scenes, so to speak, on July 1, 1969, Schechner had the lawyer for the Wooster Group, Inc., draft a Memorandum between himself and the Board of Directors, guaranteeing Schechner absolute authority in his role as Executive and Artistic Director. Then, on the day that *Dionysus in 69* closed, Schechner issued the following notice to the group:

RS has following powers:

1. To admit and dismiss members of the Group.
2. To determine what plays should be produced, the casting, and directing assignments.
3. To set workshop work and rehearsals both in terms of the nature of the work and their scheduling.
4. To supervise the planning of the environment and other artistic but non-performance matters.
5. To set fines for failure to do work, or disruption of work.

This does not signal an end to open discussion. I wish people to feel free to express their opinions. But discussion will not occur during exploratory work where it is necessary to get into the work and not evaluate it too soon.

Performers have following responsibilities:

1. To perform.
2. To be in workshops.
3. To run workshops where assigned by RS.
4. To direct plays or projects where assigned by RS. (1973: 259)

This edict mirrors the view expressed by Schechner in 1966 about the importance of a circumscribed form of organisational democracy to ensure the success of a theatre group such as the Free Southern Theater of New Orleans. At the same time, perhaps by way of compensation for this strict framework, the group consciously launched into group therapy within the rehearsal process:

The Performance Group's experiences with encounter group therapy began when Patrick McDermott stopped rehearsal one afternoon in November, 1968, and demanded that we 'stop sweeping shit under the rug and start dealing with each other.' The Group had been in existence exactly one year; we were performing *Dionysus* three nights a week and rehearsing *Makbeth* days. From the beginning many TPG exercises were 'confrontations' (a term taken from therapy and Grotowski). Two or more people face each other and say/do what they feel about each other. The performances themselves were used as confrontations, but it was impossible to direct and be honest in front of two hundred people some of whom wanted blood. And as a director I was excused the public confrontations. This was wrong because much of the tension centered on me. So intrigues developed, tensions built, work snagged.

We needed to know more about each other. We had to find ways of unblocking communication. (201)

As if this was were not enough, there were extra layers of therapeutic treatment, including professional treatment for the group as a whole:

At the time the Group got involved in group therapy I was still in psychoanalysis seeing an analyst three times weekly. Several other Group members were seeing therapists or analysts also. Sacharow, who led most of the sessions at the Garage, worked at Daytop Village, an addict treatment center, and directed Daytop's theatrical hit, *The Concept*. We had our sessions every Thursday afternoon, usually for about four hours. Attendance was not mandatory, but considerable group pressure meant that nearly everyone always attended. The sessions were direct, often brutal, and much anger was expressed. People made contact with past experiences, especially those relating to their parents. The most intimate relationships were opened for all of us to witness and sometimes participate in. I found the sessions hard because so much anger was directed at me. I began to understand how much I functioned as the Group's parent, and how destructive this was. But changing was not easy because I liked being the Group's parent. (204-5)

In such a climate it was probably inevitable that *Makbeth* took on a therapeutic meaning. Schechner's interpretation of the play, forged after collective efforts had been unfruitful, bent it towards a hyper-Oedipal plot, and created a very different scenario from that in Shakespeare's original work. (Schechner's reconstruction of *Macbeth* to yield *Makbeth* is set out in Figure 6.2 below)

Figure 6.2 Schechner's reconstruction of *Macbeth* to yield *Makbeth*

*Makbeth* (1969)

Duncan has four sons – Cawdor, Malcolm, Macduff, and Banquo – and they all want to kill him, or at least recognize their impulses toward killing him. Cawdor has rebelled, and Duncan has his own son executed. Malcolm is ripe for rebellion and tries to get his brother Macduff to join him. Banquo, though innocent of plotting against Duncan, is not without ambition to found a line of kings: the Dark Powers seduce Banquo as well as Makbeth. Makbeth is an outsider, a cousin maybe, or someone not of Duncan's blood. But he beats the sons to the punch. Duncan knows that his sons want to kill him, and he resigns himself to his fate.

Source: Schechner (1978: xiv)

Given the general mood of paranoia at the time, Schechner's own identification with Duncan is perhaps not surprising:

I personally strongly identified with this plot; I saw in it reflections both of my own family and of the situations within the Performance Group. I have three brothers, and especially when we were younger we were very competitive. There was a time in my life when I struggled against my father mightily. And I found myself somewhat of an outsider to my family's traditional circle. So in that my family story I was Macduff or Makbeth. But within the Performance Group I was Duncan; I knew that people were after my power, and that my leadership of the Group was under constant challenge and threat. In these ways, as a director, I identified at a deep and personal level with the story of the play. This kind of identification happens often with me when I direct. (1978: xiv-xv)

In fairness to Schechner, his paranoia about his position as leader can be justified on the basis of cultural, or more properly, countercultural, trends of the period. There was by this time a general climate of anti-authoritarianism and ultrademocracy amongst young middle class white Americans. R.G. Davis was having to deal with dissent 'from below' within the San Francisco Mime Troupe at almost exactly the same time. The temporary solution was the 'Inner Core' approach to decision-making, supposedly reining in the director's powers. The San Francisco Diggers, comprising talented permanent defectors from the Mime Troupe, were busily promoting the philosophy of 'Free' on the streets of San Francisco and New York, where everybody was to be liberated as a 'life-actor'. There were to be no leaders in the philosophy of Free. One either went by the name 'Free' or 'Emmett Grogan'. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was imploding as an organisation amid disputes about leadership and the agitation of factions that affected to be able to maintain a Maoist leaderless philosophy of violent self-criticism.

Nevertheless, the Performance Group had its own overarching idea of the group as dysfunctional family. This exerted a greater influence. *Macbeth* was chosen, supposedly, because of its potential for commentary on fascism in America in the late 1960s. Instead, it became inwardly focussed, dealing only with the fascism of the family. Schechner's personal identification with the play stands in contrast to the philosophical stance of directors such as Brecht or Grotowski. It also undermines Schechner's own view of the principal function of theatre as reasserting the collective nature of ritual and ecstasy rather than articulating the tribulations of the individual. The individual is still primary in *Makbeth*, the collective secondary, making a non-individualistic theatre highly problematic. The play is not about the Democratic Convention, nor about the slaying of Mexican students. Ultimately, political power is not analysed in any context other than the dynamics of the family. This begs the question as to whether, at this time, the Performance Group could have approached *Macbeth* another way or whether Schechner and the group felt that this was some kind of countercultural social drama that needed to be played out for performers and audiences.

To put it another way, although the choice of *Macbeth*, according to Schechner, had a lot to do with its being a metaphor for America in a state of self-destruction in the late 1960s, it is a cruel play without any affirmation of group life whatsoever. Just as Davis subsequently confessed that he urged Brecht's *Congress*

of the *Whitewashers* on the San Francisco Mime Troupe in order to teach the group a lesson, it is almost as if Schechner prescribed Shakespeare's darkest play about 'power struggles' and 'betrayals' to precipitate a crisis within the Performance Group about who was in control. This is not to say that any cruel play should be avoided by a theatre group with pro-group ideals. The Living Theatre's production of *The Brig* showed that a savage work could be collectively well performed. However, the types of action used in *Makbeth* did not build unity.

*Makbeth* also asked a great deal of the actors in task and social-emotional terms. By the standards of the time it may not have seemed abnormal to a) have the group simultaneously undergo group therapy with a therapist who treated addicts, b) perform *Dionysus in 69* at night, and c) rehearse *Makbeth* during the day. This routine was demanding, personally intrusive and often confrontational. On the face of it this was a marked departure from the earlier methodology of the Performance Group which had focussed on exploring the physical body of both performer and audience, e.g., looking, touching, smelling, and otherwise cooperating physically on stage. The Living Theatre tended to project its confrontation outwards, so that the enemy, as in *Antigone* and *Paradise Now*, was usually the audience. The arguments that took place were most often between performers and audience. For the Performance Group the priority given to closed therapeutic confrontation suggests an underlying attachment to psychologism, and acceptance, after Freud, both of the human condition as essentially neurotic, and the belief that all group dynamics are about betrayal and abuse of power. *Makbeth* functioned as a self-fulfilling prophesy for the group.

In terms of Bion's basic-assumption group, the Performance Group seems at this time, through its flight solely into therapy, with no relief through rites of *communitas* or *ecstasy*, to have become locked into the fight response. They fought amongst themselves and blamed the leader for their situation. The group divided into two factions and battles were fought over who had rights of occupancy in the Performing Garage. The non-Schechner faction was referred to as 'The Six' by Schechner in correspondence to the Group's lawyer Jerry Ordovery on January 21, 1970. The 'current schism' he attributes to his move to dismiss Ciel Smith. The Six were Smith, Remi Barclay, Margaret Ryan and Patrick McDermott with a sub-faction of William Finley and Jason Bosseau (Richard Schechner Papers 8MWEZ + n.c. TPG 23,452 - Correspondence). Schechner publicly chronicled the 'blow-up', as he termed it, in *The New York Times* (Schechner, 1970a). With the next incarnation of the group, the internal conflicts did not disappear, but it became a more outward looking entity.

### 1970-71: The Performance Group as fight/unite entity

The Performance Group disintegrated in January 1970, at precisely the same time the Living Theatre announced its division into four cells. During February 1970, in the immediate wake of legal threats and acrimony surrounding the break-up, Schechner withdrew temporarily from involvement with the

Performance Group. In March, he and three others who had worked on *Makbeth* revived the group and auditioned for new members, adding some half-dozen individuals to make a nine-member group of performers. (Advertisements were placed for actors with familiarity with Stanislavsky's training methods) Work began on new material. In May, the Performing Garage reverted to Schechner's control (the other faction had left), allowing work to proceed in earnest on a new play.

#### The milieu of *Commune*: rediscovering unity

The new work dealt with group experiences of other Americans, in marked contrast to the tradition of anti-traditionalism or ahistoricism in American culture in general:

Our workshops are exploring basic psychophysical and verbophysical exercises, improvisations, interpersonal explorations and confrontations, sound and movement, dialogue and scene work. We meet three times a week and in the near future we will meet four times a week. Each meeting is for five hours. Our project is tentatively called *Initiations: From Brook Farm to Spahn's Ranch*. The project is an investigation, on several levels of the impulse, history, developmental crises, and interpersonal dimensions of utopian communes in the United States. (Schechner qtd. in Lichti, 1986: 141-42)

The piece was eventually given the title *Commune*, in the sense of 'to commune', as well as a descriptor for a group of people or a geographic location. It claimed to deal explicitly with American history:

*Commune* is a genuinely collective work. It brings together creative energies from a number of people and times. Included in the work are the words of Melville, Shakespeare, Thoreau, the Bible, the American colonists, the Brook Farm communards, Charles Manson, Roman Polanski, Susan Atkins. And the words of members of the Performance Group. (Schechner qtd. in Sainer, 1997:162).

In many respects it was a new start. There were new members in the group. The collaborative domain was being expanded to take in matter more explicitly anchored in American experience. Nevertheless, Schechner at least, carried over some of his key ideas about the group experience. The group as a devouring organism was an overriding image, as it had been in *Dionysus in 69*, when the Bacchantes smothered and then dismembered Pentheus, and also in *Makbeth*, where family and friends feasted on each other in certain scenes. In commenting on the use of visceral processes, such as imitating the eating of human flesh, in performance and reflecting upon an exercise done in workshops in 1971, Schechner claims:

This exercise is one of many about cannibalism. Some of this has found its way into performance – for example, the cannibalistic banquets of *Makbeth*. Eating exercises that come from listening to the sounds within the body and the vocalizing these and using the vocalizations as the basis of a dance took on for the Group in 1970 a definite and repeatable pattern: that of identifying, fattening, murdering, cannibalizing, and resurrecting a group leader, or scapegoat. Philip Slater has detected the same pattern in Training Groups: 'What is particularly compelling about the attack [on the leader] is the variety of fantasy themes associated with it: themes of group murder, of cannibalism, of orgy.' I am especially interested in these themes because they are basic dramatic stories, found in innumerable variations in many cultures. Tragedy can be viewed as a cannibalistic sharing of a leader's special power, the distribution of his *mana*. (1973: 142)

The key exercise that was used at the start of the rehearsal process for *Commune* was called 'Recapitulation':

The performers lie on the floor and listen to the sounds inside themselves and in the room. Sounds come from passing traffic, from heartbeats, breathing, stomach rumbling, house noises. Each performer selects from what he hears a basic rhythm. He gets his breathing together with this rhythm. Slowly each performer discovers a beat, a song, a pattern-of-being-in-harmony-with-the-spaces-inside-him-and-outside-him. Performers rise, dance to these patterns, dance *in* the patterns. The dance is augmented by chanting and singing and builds to a paroxysm. Then everyone collapses on the floor. Soon they rise again, but this time they dance with each other, as a group. (274)

In keeping with the view of the group as a consuming entity, the Recapitulations became focussed on the nourishing, and ultimate sacrifice, of the leader. Schechner noted at the time of these early rehearsals:

Group is original community. Selection of leader parallels establishment of parliamentary democracy. Fattening of leader = materialism/industrialization = success. Group kills leader then finds new leader – killed – again, very fast, ritual combats. Only one is left. He sings 'song of myself.' Name game. Recapitulation.

Totem feast. Cannibalism. Mana. (275)

One of the major Recapitulations that was developed in *Commune* was the 'Organism', a cluster of performers that moved together *en masse*, with eyes, limbs, and senses probing the performance space for its victim, one of the other performers. The Organism was inversely responsive to sound. Noise impeded its movements. Loud noise caused it to collapse completely. It could only move comfortably in silence. The challenge to the audience was to make a noise in order to prevent the cannibalistic acts of the Organism from taking place (this happened on several occasions during the play's lengthy run). The work took some nine months to develop. (An outline of the stage action for the first version of *Commune* is given in Figure 6.3 below)

Figure 6.3 Stage action in *Commune*

*Commune* (1970-71)

*Commune* begins with improvised singing and talking as the performers tell how they came to the Performance Group. Then they transform themselves into the characters of the piece, a group of young people seeking Utopia in Death Valley, California, and reliving the events that they have participated in the night before -- the Sharon Tate murders. The scene shifts again to a swift recapitulation of American history: the arrival of immigrants at the Statue of Liberty, the exploration of the continent, searches for treasure, witch hunts, modern day vacations, revival meetings, dune buggy races. Incorporated throughout the performance are moments of the actors' personal lives, and their reactions to such subjects as death and violence. The performers reenact the Manson murders, and Lt. Calley testifying on the slaughter of villagers at My Lai. The play ends with dialogue taken from an interview with Tate's husband, Roman Polanski. Abruptly, the performance is over, reaching no conclusions and giving no answers. The company returns the belongings they have borrowed from audience members, cleans up and leaves the theatre.

Source: Lichti (1986: 145) (NB. Lichti's past tense wording has been altered to the present tense.)

Although the finished work contained excerpts from the sources identified by Schechner in the earlier quotation, suggesting drawing-upon a rich heritage of constructive collective impulses in American history,

the dominating image or idea of the group could not have been conveyed more menacingly. While the Organism itself was a physical manifestation of this group idea, the characters of the actors doubly reinforced it. The main characters were not Thoreau, or Melville, or Shakespeare. They were thinly disguised members of the Manson family, for whom the motto 'The family that slays together stays together' appears to have been specifically coined.

Whether or not Schechner's larger meta-narrative about democracy, materialism, and the inevitable sacrifice of the leader to the group could be successfully conveyed with such an emotive group image is doubtful. When *Commune* opened in December 1970 it attracted mixed reviews. In a *TDR* review, for example, Richard Gilman could find little merit in it:

In general the production works best when it isn't trying to be profound and apocalyptic, a not very demanding observation to make. More interesting than that, it works best whenever it has something entirely independent of the performers' egos or life histories to play with and against. In this way, the musical elements of the evening seem to me the most satisfying of all; these folk songs and spirituals, inserted into a context that releases them from sentimentality and over-familiarity, provide a tension between the artlessness of most of the proceedings and a formal, inherited, impersonal dimension of expression. (1971: 329)

Nevertheless, others praised *Commune* for its apparent candour:

The result is the most honest theatrical capturing of the spirit of American history that I have encountered. It is a history that does not settle for the familiar, numbing chronological view. It does not cop-out with an either-or, hard hat-peacenik, under thirty-over thirty, patriot traitor judgement. (Tribby, 1971: 207)

It was, at the very least, an attempt to make a distinctly American theatre. In terms of audience appeal *Commune* appears to have resonated particularly well with college students. Overall, the play turned out to be quite successful, running, with occasional breaks for vacations, for a full two years.

#### *Commune* as a community play

Although many aspects of the working process and the theme of the threatening group remained the same for *Commune* as they had been for *Dionysus* and *Macbeth*, the new Performance Group seems to have been much less inward-looking and insular overall. Firstly, the group spent seven weeks of the summer in residency at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Workshops were held with students. In September Schechner spent time in residence at Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont. He conducted a nakedness workshop, Choices 2, and later another called Groupings. The student workshops in this way fed new ideas and exercises into the work of the Performance Group.

Indeed, the college connection seems a crucial factor in *Commune*'s development. For example, the abrupt ending in the first version, as it happened, had been something of a compromise. For the first six months of

performance (a break was taken in June 1969) the group simply did not know how to end the work. From the summer of 1971 a musical ending was used. This addition coincided with the group's summer residency at the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island. The group was housed at a farm in Narragansett. Activities included a 30-person ecstasy-dance workshop, a cannibalism exercise, a nakedness workshop, a piece created with students, called 'Arrangements', and another, a variant of 'Arrangements', entitled *Clothes*. The group preferred to work, alone, and with students, in a small 'scene shop' rather than the university's giant, barely finished auditorium. *Commune* was performed at Rhode Island a number of times.

The play had also been performed in the Rhode Island Festival 'Theatre '71' in late March, as part of a programme that included works by the Bread and Puppet Theatre, the Open Theatre, and the Manhattan Project. Similarly, in summer 1972 the group was in residency at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Work included a 'real-time' version of *Commune* for students to experience at the College Auditorium – the length, including warm-ups was four and a half hours (a typical show was 90 minutes). A collaborative piece with students, entitled *Clothes (II)*, was performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery. In November of that year, shortly before the end of its run the structure of *Commune* was changed in order to re-enliven the production during a short festival season in Paris, France.

Quite apart from the fact that the group was able to work in pleasant surroundings over summer periods, there appears to have been less insularity than had been the case with both *Dionysus in 69* and *Makbeth*. The group therapy sessions were abandoned. Furthermore, audience participation was more moderately conceived:

But more than in (*Makbeth*)<sup>13</sup> and *Dionysus* spectators have the choice of sitting at the edge of a platform, deep in a pueblo, with other persons, or alone. The spectator can choose his own mode of involving himself with the performance, or remaining detached from it. The audience was offered real choices and the chance to exercise these choices several times throughout the performance. (Schechner, 1973: 6)

Indeed, at various times in the performance the audience, or parts of it, could take centre-stage. Some of the dialogue took place on either side of, or around, a small group of audience members. There was no deliberate confrontation, but there was involvement. One senses that it was a more humane working environment overall than had been the case with both *Makbeth* and *Dionysus in 69*. Shephard's book *The Dionysus Group* (1991) sets out in extensive detail how brutal the actors could be towards each other in the latter work.

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<sup>13</sup> The text says *Commune* but should read *Makbeth*.



Mild revolt: a new group paradigm

Despite some softening of demands made upon actors, Schechner's leadership approach for much of the play's two-year lifespan does not seem to have differed radically from that of the past. Interestingly, as he had done before with *Dionysus in 69*, Schechner left the group to perform *Commune* in New York while he travelled in Asia, from October 1971 until April 1972 (Joan McIntosh, the only original member of the Performance from 1967 still in the group, joined him for some of this period). Elizabeth LeCompte directed the second season of *Commune*. During this season the audience participation element, where audience members were made My Lai prisoners and forced to join a group in the centre of the action or substitute someone else from the audience (there were at least four variations of this scene), was dropped.

In May 1972, after Schechner's return, a new legal structure for the Performance Group was drawn up, partly as a result of group members telling Schechner that they felt unfairly manipulated. They demanded a more democratic structure. Schechner agreed and although the new structure was far short of being a collective, there was more power-sharing than had been the case with earlier versions of the Performance Group. All members were members of the corporation with voting rights and there was a new principle of diffuse leadership:

Presently the Group is not yet a collective. But leadership is spread around with several of us making decisions. Also the Group as a whole is not only consulted (as always) but *empowered* to make decisions. It is in the area of workshops and rehearsals – the daily artistic work – that a good deal of work still needs to be done. I don't know what needs to be done, but the process of collaboration, participation, and collectivization is started, and not finished. (Schechner, 1973: 268-69)

Schechner seems very sanguine here about the change in structure, appearing far less threatened by the expressed needs of the performers. One could even argue, recalling his earlier 'manifestos' for theatre groups, that his philosophy here seems to have undergone a reversal. The play, or the theatre, at least, is no longer the thing. The performer is paramount. Indeed, his humanistic outline of the new group approach reads more like a charter for the Living Theatre of the late 1960s:

Although TPG has no rules concerning group life (the punitive rules of the first Group went the way of that group), there are some principles that I think we try to follow.

1. The needs of all individuals in the Group ought to be expressed as clearly as possible. If someone broadcasts resentment – or any strong unarticulated feelings – others will ask what's the matter. This may lead to confrontations, discussions, a new direction in the work, changes.
2. Prior scheduling of rehearsals, or anything else, bends to take in whatever is happening among individuals. Even, if necessary, performances are postponed; I don't recall a performance ever being canceled because of a confrontation. There is a continuous interplay between 'work life' and 'personal life.'
3. Each member finds for himself the work that suits him best. If this work isn't necessary for the Group, then the person will sooner or later leave the Group. In any case, the needs of the individual ought to be expressed, and the needs of the Group ought to be met.

4. Confrontations may be explosive and with everyone participating and witnessing; or they may be among just a few people, or just two, and quiet. There is no ritual to follow: only the need to keep the space between people open for communication.
5. Group life determines aesthetic life. That is, what a production is – or becomes – derives from what/who the Group is, and not the other way around. Roles are cast in accordance to what individuals need to do at a particular stage of their development... (279-80)

However, while this approach is intended to be kinder to the performer, it is still more inward-looking than outwardly directed. There is more of a conscious effort to break the theatrical frame and to recognise the performer as a human being rather than impose an idea of the group as devouring entity. Nevertheless, the group serves the individuals within it. Other groups and the external community are not mentioned. The concrete connection to a larger community remains unclear.

### **The dilemma of the Performance Group: the theatre group as liminoid community**

Accounts of Performance Group life such as those furnished by Richard Schechner and William Shephard resemble the descriptive accounts of therapeutic group life relayed by psychologist W.R. Bion in *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (1961). This is particularly so in regard to Bion's reflections upon the expectations of group members about leadership, and his own initial diffidence about assuming a leadership role. Indeed, one can read Schechner's book *Environmental Theater* (1973) as a chronicle, albeit intermingled with several performance theory theme areas, of the life of the Performance Group. In it one can see the fight/flight group process identified by Bion in his therapeutic group settings as more or less coterminous with the group's work on *Dionysus in 69*, *Makbeth* and *Commune* over the period 1967 to 1971.

A constant thread running through the three major works is the potential for fascism in groups in American society. It is the group that breeds fascism, not the individual. In essence, the group, while it fascinated, promised moments of communion, affirmation and loss of ego, is ultimately a suspect entity. This was embodied in the on-stage and off-stage work of the group. The Performance Group did not go so far as to attempt communal living in order to test this thesis. Instead, a largely hermetic rehearsal process was used to pressure-cook the group experience. However, rather than approach it without presuppositions, the group's members, particularly Schechner, but also Shephard and other members, if their anecdotal recollections are reliable, brought to this entity the principal expectation that it would be conflict-ridden and agonised, in keeping with Freud's view of the family as the site for the civilising of the individual's instinctual urges. They thus found what they were looking for, especially with *Makbeth*. And while this was the dominant group idea, there was also a sincerely-felt ideal: a transcendental *communitas* might be achieved in performance, however ephemerally, from which both performers and audience could benefit.

On top of this, the Performance Group attempted to break the theatrical frame so that the performers were more real for themselves and for the audience. The group seems to have operated under the assumption, widespread at the time, that a thorough absence of socially constructed role-playing was beneficial to the individual. There was no allowing for the possibility, as Goffman implies, that role-taking is a necessary adaptation, a means of coping with the unstable conditions of modern society, where identity is not specified clearly by the larger social structure as was the case in pre-industrial societies. Bound up with this concern about the position of the self was the rising tide of, not just participatory democracy, but ultrademocracy amongst the under-25 countercultural demographic that comprised the Performance Group in its early years, and much of its audience in the late 1960s. Schechner's own diffidence about leadership led him to lurch between authoritarian control and a leaderless therapeutic sensitivity or T-group approach. The underlying individualist idea of the group, based on Freud's individualist psychology was fueled by the individual-oriented liberationist psychologies of Marcuse, R.D. Laing, Timothy Leary and others.

It is tempting, then, to interpret the Performance Group of the 1960s principally in terms of the confused impetus towards of *communitas* and ultrademocracy that swept the counterculture. Certainly, Shephard sees a link with tribal consciousness of the time:

The Group was not simply an isolated phenomenon; we identified with the counterculture which repudiated the values of the establishment, advocating alternative lifestyles and social values. There was a form of tribal consciousness in our youth-oriented radicalism which derived its strength and cohesiveness from our opposition to the establishment. [...] The Dionysus Group was, for the most part, a collection of 'liminal entities' – social neophytes – who were 'betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention and ceremonial,' (Turner 1969:95) and we attempted, through *Dionysus*, to effect our own integration into a larger social structure which ultimately meted out the recognition and rewards accorded to artists in American society. (1991: 236-37)

In fact, one would have to argue for the Performance Group as an exceptional 'liminoid' entity. As young white middle class intellectuals immersed in the counterculture, members nevertheless worked extremely hard at unravelling some of the issues for members of their class. Their brutal confrontations with each other in some of their works, notably *Dionysus in 69* and *Macbeth* belies any popular image of the 1960s generation as comprised of lazy, hedonistic hippies. They did not escape, as did many of their peers, into exotic cultural practices, nor did they deny their privileged status in society; they declared their status in their works, problematising it to a certain extent, and making it a subject for debate. In this respect the Performance Group was closer to the San Francisco Mime Troupe than many may think. Both groups were aware of the class positions of their members, and their audiences, as intellectuals, even if they differed in their emphases on appropriate courses of actions. The Performance Group opted for hip political detachment, as Stefan Brecht observed in his review of *Dionysus in 69*, while the Mime Troupe opted for hip political engagement.

Despite progress made from *Dionysus in 69* through to *Commune*, both as a functioning group and as a group connected to a context other than the theatre, the Performance Group, to a great extent, always remained a part-time community of young intellectuals. Members did not live together communally except during the occasional college residency. In its first incarnation it contained several co-habiting couples, and this of course affected the way the group worked, particularly during stage confrontations, and when group therapy started, since, according to Shephard, partnered individuals seemed to be more direct, if not harsh, with each other (1991: 102). In general, however, there was a strong demarcation between the public and domestic lives of the performers (58, 93). The Performance Group did not extend the breaking of Goffman's theatrical frame far beyond the performance space.

Furthermore, compared to both the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the Performance Group was a smaller and demographically more homogeneous group. It tended not to stray far from New York City. Nor did the Performance Group engage in many non-theatrical community activities (an exception was *Government Anarchy* [1970]), in contrast to both the Living Theatre, which often lent its support to protests during its nomadic travels in Europe and America, and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, which often dispatched the Troupe itself, or guerrilla sub-units such as the Gorilla Marching Band or the Gutter Puppets, to events and locations in the Bay Area.

Community and communality were to be explored principally in the rehearsal and performance environment, almost always the Performing Garage at 133 Wooster Street. There was little cross-fertilisation of views other than during the pre-determined and transitory occasions afforded during the course of particular performances, open rehearsals, and workshops at colleges. Here a controlled intermingling between performance group members and audience group members took place. Yet, insofar as there was a communitarian ethos within the group, both towards its own members and, in principle, towards audience members, the introspective philosophy made its transactions with audiences problematic. Certainly, it eschewed the more tendentious and outwardly directed confrontational approach of the Living Theatre, which often seems to have used the audience as a therapeutic object, a scapegoat for the oppression of individual freedom, thereby neatly deflecting any self-criticism or reflexivity that might otherwise have been useful or indeed necessary. However, after an initial commitment to intimate and sexually liberated audience participation, and attempts at communion, in the form of ecstasy dances and total caresses, this direct engagement was dropped by the Performance Group and later reintroduced in much more moderate terms, posing a moral dilemma rather than inviting a group grope. The audience seemed at once necessary and an imposition, at least in Schechner's view:

What makes a theater group special is that its work is to perform. No matter what techniques are used to facilitate groupness, to bring all participants together, even to form a community: living together, talking out problems, sharing problems, making decisions collectively . . . finally if the community is a theater, the theater performs: for an audience. Without audiences the movement toward community could be completed without hindrance; or if a community failed, it would be due to inadequacies in the group or an outside social situation so hostile that no community could

survive. But for theater communities there is the unique problem of the audience; a contradiction eating at the heart of the project. (1973: 281)

The problem of the audience, however, seems vexing only if special autonomous status is granted to theatre in the first place. As noted earlier, the assumption that a theatre group can work first at being a community on its own and then go to the larger community is something of an intellectual leap of faith, or evidence of uncertainty as to what constitutes community. One could argue that the theatre exists to perform the rituals of the community that the community values. It is essentially reactive. The notion that the theatre is a self-referential simulacrum for social experimentation is a Western construct, not a universal characteristic. Thus, a theatre may be liminal in pre-industrial society, articulating rites of passage, but it is not liminoid. Liminal theatre restores society more or less intact. In liminoid society and liminoid theatre the return to the structure of society is arguably an open question. The concepts of community and society have already become opaque. The Performance Group was a liminoid community, if it was a community at all, and without a reliable long-term plan for interactions between members instability was inevitable.

Still, the Performance Group performed 'being a group' physically and non-verbally with a striking aesthetic unity that could not have failed to make the audience think about what it means to belong to a purposeful group. The Birth Ritual of *Dionysus in 69* and the Organism of *Commune* were probably as effective in manifesting 'groupness' as the Living Theatre's human sculpture of the Creature in *Frankenstein*. There were other innovations that the Performance Group brought to performance which may have, on occasions, bridged gaps between individual performers and audience members and created a larger temporary liminoid group, or groups, within the performance space. This is most easily apprehended in their spatial explorations and the erasure of the fixed stage, where actors and audience were routinely interposed and reconfigured. Furthermore, the other rupture of the theatrical frame, that of stepping out of character, which although not new in theatre by any means at the time, the Performance Group extended markedly by engaging each other in a more or less spontaneous and unrehearsed way in real time. They did this as members of a theatre group, not as stage characters. Whatever its shortcomings in terms of stage dramaturgy, the Performance Group was arguably the foremost theatrical entity of the 1960s in terms of seriously interrogating what it meant to be a group *per se*. Rather than wholly sublimating group dynamics to putting on a good show, or dealing glibly with worthy social issues, the group consciously allocated time to the matter of being a group. When the transactions between individual performers did not overwhelm the content of a production, there was arguably useful insight for young intellectuals who felt estranged from group life. They could come, as audience, to see what group life was all about and perhaps join in for transitory moments of *communitas*.

Schechner, more than most, it could be said, was aware of the tension between a tribal, codified, liminal concept of theatre, and a Western conception of theatre as critical, transgressive, and liminoid:

It is my thesis [...] that the need to form groups – think how many groups have been formed in the past ten years! – is an attempt to restore wholeness and community to theater. But the group-makers also need to retain abilities of analysis, criticism, and objectivity introduced into Western drama by the Greeks. Group theaters identify with *both* tribal and Greek theaters; they want to live in both New Guinea and Athens. Thus we are involved in a deep, painful, and irresolvable contradiction. For it is not possible for the audience to exist and not exist at the same time. Nor can spectators simply be asked to participate. Nor is it possible to create a community in the span of a few hours. Nor can I give up my need for wholeness and community. Living through these difficulties has caused some theaters to turn inward, making of themselves examples of group life and creativity. (1973: 251)

Schechner includes the Performance Group as part of this inward turn. Yet, while the contradiction that he identifies may be real for Western theatre, it is perhaps only so because Westerners are inward-looking or self-absorbed, not by nature, but through the cultural inheritance and economic privileges available to certain elites. The Greek tradition is a particular type of intellectual tradition. This begs the question as to how this contradiction has been created. If the primary objective of the theatre is to 'serve the people', then the 'movement toward community' cannot be purely self-referential. The community is something to which the theatre must answer, as feminist, ethnic, environmental, and other grass-roots or community theatres constantly aver. While contradictions remain, insofar as community expectations and the aspirations of the performers may conflict, the process is at least palpably dialectical: the group tries its work out on the community and very quickly receives feedback, whether it is validation or censure. By contrast, if the group process is, as Schechner (and many others) have conceived it, something of an abstraction or end in itself, then this places a great burden on members – to see the group as its own community and not to take cues from outside about the worthiness of the group.

It should be noted that the Living Theatre in the 1960s was only slightly less inward-looking, declaring itself to be a nomadic, non-property owning, self-contained community. The Performance Group also seems to have seen itself as first and foremost a community for itself, which secondarily performs to the wider community. Schechner recognised the problem of mutual knowing, but could not see beyond an impasse at the time:

Lots of theaters have tried to build a style from the belief that the audience and the performers together could form a community, no matter how temporary. Much of the work of the Living Theater (sic) was based on this belief. As the Living wrote of *Paradise Now*:

'The Revolution seeks to establish a State of Being of Interdependence between the Individual and the Collective, in which the individual is not sacrificed to the Collective nor the Collective to the individual. . . .

The Revolution of which the play speaks is the Beautiful Non-Violent Anarchist Revolution.' (*Paradise Now* 5-7)

But this is not what happened. What I've laid out in this chapter extends beyond the Performance Group. Wherever we are, we are *not* in a communal culture with shared goals and techniques. In theatrical terms this means: *No matter what reasons people have for coming to the theater, they are not there for the same reasons as the performers. . . .*

The performers know something the audience does not. If nothing else, the performers know each other and the audience does not. And if one starts with a theater full of people who do not know each other – as some have proposed – this is a guarantee of equality, not community. For community is based on mutual knowing, not mutual ignorance. (1973: 282)

What seems to have made this particularly difficult was the climate of ultrademocracy at the time. Equality was the cornerstone of community, and ultrademocracy was an overriding norm within the counterculture at least. However, the alternative, reinvention of community in the context of an abstract affinity group that has a certain demographic equality, does not seem viable. Without diversity and disagreement there cannot be community. One of the difficulties for Western theatres, as Schechner notes, is the deformation of theatre into an optional consumer commodity:

Theatre can be celebratory, even orgiastic, and communal. It can channel social energy and redistribute it; it can generate action or neutralize the impulse toward action. In the hands of those who know how to use it, it can be a powerful weapon for public control or, conversely, for radical change.

Most primitive societies are rich in theatrical lore and exercises. The theatre is a natural way to celebrate birth, puberty, marriage, the acquisition or transmission of public power, and death; to commemorate house-building, planting, harvest; to retell events of national importance and personal terror and joy. That we in the West have reduced theatre to a spare-time entertainment does not diminish theatre's potential or exhaust its world-wide traditional functions. And it is becoming increasingly clear that our Western avant-garde is, in world perspective, nothing other than a return to the most traditional theatre. (1969b: 213)

Schechner and the Performance Group chose to try and battle this alienation of the theatre from the community on its own terms, in a theatre never far from the Broadway system that charged admission, in much the same way that the Group Theatre attempted to challenge Broadway in the 1930s. It does not appear, however, that they were able to get sufficient distance from their position in the Western avant-garde tradition of the time to avoid the pitfalls of this alienated theatre. While recognising the trenchant individualism of Western art, the tacitly sanctioned psychological individualism of Western society was overlooked:

The difference between art as we know it in the West and theatre as it has traditionally shown itself world-wide is that Western art is individualized while traditional theatre is communal. In its communal forms, theatre is both socially constructive and personally 'transcendent' or ecstatic. But our art has long lost this double - and contradictory - function, becoming instead a function of individualism: the Protestant-capitalist ethic. And it is inevitable that the individualization of art leads to its commercialization. Nothing formally distinguishes the labor of the artist from the labor of any other worker – and labor is bought and sold by the piece or by the hour. (218)

Schechner ponders the success of theatre in Eastern Europe in overcoming this, beyond a matter of state-funding for the arts:

And the failure of theatre in America is more than a question of poverty. We simply are not brought up to believe in groups; we are trained toward an individualistic ethic that makes us want to achieve things on our own, by ourselves. These values are inimical to theatre. (218)

How this problem could ever have been overcome by the Performance Group in the milieu of commercial theatre, battling as a peripheral Off-Off-Broadway theatre group, remains a moot point. Furthermore, instead of challenging individualism, the Performance Group seems, ultimately, to have endorsed an individualist ontology with its enthusiasm for a group therapy approach so steeped in individualist Freudian psychology. The idea of the group as threatening entity seems to have been so ingrained that an agonised view was not seen as partisan at this time. It was by definition a troubled new community that the Performance Group sought to establish.

### Conclusion

It is difficult to say what really happened to the Performance Group after the 1960s. The traumas that took place in the late 1960s do not seem so evident in later years. The group went on to stage a number of major works, including Sam Shepard's *The Tooth of Crime* (1972), Brecht's *Mother Courage* (1975), and Genet's *The Balcony* (1979), some of them highly successful. Schechner was involved in these productions, as were some of the members of the Performance Group from the *Commune* period, notably Spalding Gray, Elizabeth LeCompte, and Joan McIntosh. In the early 1970s, at least, Schechner saw the group as a maturing entity:

The problems of 'middle-aged' groups are often overlooked. Most groups never reach this stage. They disintegrate early, or they explode when first coming up against the subtle, difficult problems of the 'middle years' in the life of a group. Other groups try to work through these problems. This is what is happening (I think) in the Open Theater, the Polish Laboratory Theater, and TPG. (1973: 284)

He was guardedly optimistic, where some of his peers had already become disenchanted:

The thoughts I have about groups – TPG and others; even the impulse to form communes – are mixed: at an impasse. Chaikin said to the Open Theater: 'We have more or less said we are a task group: we work through problems in order to perform a work as a group.' I agree but add: Most of the life of the group is unknown, it is unconscious; it comes up in the style of the work, the ways people have of relating to each other. (277)

As it happened, the 'life of the group' after Schechner made these comments included a sub-group within the Performance Group that coalesced between 1975 and 1980. This sub-group eventually eclipsed Schechner's interests and influence and the Wooster Group became the successor to the Performance Group.<sup>14</sup> Schechner's view of this development, contained in *The End of Humanism* (1982: 37-39), is that he withdrew gradually from active involvement, partly due to an age-group effect: the main people in the group were no longer in their 20s and they wanted to do their own work. Nevertheless, the transition cannot be entirely dissociated from the influence of individual people and their personal styles. Elizabeth LeCompte assumed a greater role in direction from the early 1970s. Neither Schechner nor LeCompte

<sup>14</sup> 'The Wooster Group' was chosen because, as noted earlier, it was the name of the legal or corporate entity created by Schechner and others during the formation of the Performance Group in 1967.



valued the approach of orthodox theatre company directors, and Schechner has stated that he passed on what he knew about directing to LeCompte (Schechner, 1982: 34). LeCompte herself has acknowledged that her years as assistant to Schechner amounted to an apprenticeship (Savran, 1991:3). However, by around 1974, LeCompte had come to conclusions about praxis that set her apart from Schechner. For instance, Schechner wanted to explore performance using some of the techniques of sensitivity training, which had become popular as a therapeutic tool during the 1960s. LeCompte saw this as too psycho-analytical (Savran, 1991: 3; see also Greene 1991: 118-19).

Whatever the circumstances, Schechner left to pursue other activities (e.g., co-ordinating A Bunch of Experimental Theatres) and he has continued, albeit with a slightly lower public profile, to maintain or direct a company of one sort or another, including East Coast Artists over the past decade or so. On a production-by-production basis he has retained his commitment to group work as an ideal form of collaboration and has done much guest directing in many different countries, both within university settings and with professional companies, largely in recognition of this strong belief in collective work. He has also continued to teach at NYU, where he has interacted with student groups that must by now number in the hundreds, if not thousands. LeCompte, Spalding Gray and others have carried on with the Wooster Group, which describes itself as 'an ensemble of artists who collaborate on the development and production of theater and media pieces' (<http://www.thewoostergroup.org/twg/about.html>). The post-Schechner group is a collaborating ensemble of artists, suggesting a marked shift in group ideal away from the radical affinity, or liminoid star group explorations of existential communitas of the late 1960s. The politics of this position continue to provoke discussion amongst theorists. Some see in this later group description and the works produced by the Wooster Group a disheartening, if not socially irresponsible, default to Performance Artist individualism ([Robert] Marx, 1986; Schechner, 1982) while others, such as Auslander (1992) argue that it is true to the age and that it carries an in-built critique of the isolated position of the individual which, ultimately, may drive audiences towards more, rather than less, socially embedded activities in their own lives.

It can also be seen as a logical consequence of the search for communitas principally along one dimension, i.e., the existential dimension. While the Performance Group avoided many of the pitfalls of normative and ideological communitas demands (e.g., naïve political alignments), it was difficult to maintain the other dimension for long without a meta-structure that went beyond Schechner's own theory and philosophy of performance.

## Chapter Seven

### Comparisons, contrasts and conclusions

#### Introduction

The previous three chapters have discussed how the group ethos evolved in the Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe and Performance Group respectively. In this chapter, each theatre group is assessed, firstly, in terms of the three general questions posed in the introductory chapter of the thesis. The first was How did the group organise itself off-stage? This is discussed under the heading of 'social organisation'. The second was How was the group idea(l) performed on stage? This is termed 'stage organisation'. The third was How was the group constructed in terms of what participants and observers alike said or wrote about the group idea(l)? This is treated briefly under 'projection and reception' and is dealt with in greater detail when I revisit the broader questions outlined in Chapter One, i.e., How was the ideal of the group as a social phenomenon in the 1960s performed by radical American theatres? What were the politics of the group experience? and What prototypes of the group experience, if any, did radical theatres employ to realise the group ideal? These broader questions are addressed by comparing the three groups with the group typologies derived in Chapter Two and with the discussion in Chapter Three of the more general politics of the group experience and countercultural influences. Thirdly, I consider the legacies of the group experiments of the three radical theatre groups.

#### The Living Theatre

##### Social organisation

Although in the early 1960s men seem to have outnumbered women in the Living Theatre, gender composition, as was the case in the Mime Troupe and the Performance Group, seems to have been evenly balanced. Indeed, the off-stage organisation of the Living Theatre of the mid-to-late 1960s shares the qualities of a typical creedal hippie commune of up to forty relatively young, sexually and culturally liberated, middle-class Americans and Europeans, but with some important exceptions. Firstly, there was no collective ownership (nor private endowment or bequest), nor long-term occupation, of any geographically specific site. Secondly, rural hippie communes, their provocations of local residents notwithstanding, tended to be set in out-of-the-way places. One had to search out rural communes, and much of what transpired was relatively private, consistent with Kanter's characterisation of retreat communes. The Living Theatre was anything but private. Its attitude was more militant than the 'live and let live' ethos of other hippie groups, despite adherence to some general principles of tolerance and sharing.

Similarly, Beck's frequent claim about the Living Theatre existing, by preference, as an anarchist commune has to be treated with caution. Most anarcho-syndicalist communes presuppose control over, and definition of, a specific territory, the rejection of individualised private property rights notwithstanding. Such communes also presuppose a village exchange economy without the need for money or commodification of goods. The Living Theatre seems to have straddled, rather uncomfortably, the divide between a cash and an exchange economy, attempting to make the most out of the financial wealth of the cultural elite. Only when the group went to Brazil and Pittsburgh in the 1970s did it temporarily eschew the principle of the ticket office.

The other description favoured by Beck and others, is that of the Living Theatre as a nomadic community. Certainly, the Living Theatre was on the move for most of the 1960s. In both Europe and America it was prepared to travel long distances to put on shows, seemingly without concern for the length of any particular engagement. Indeed, as the tour itineraries, detailed in Appendices C to F of this thesis, show, one-nighters were the norm, not the exception. The stamina required for such journeying, particularly with entire family groups in tow, must have been considerable. The image of a caravan of five Volkswagen Kombis crossing and re-crossing Europe between 1964 and 1968, reinforces the notion of a nomadic or gypsy tribe. This somewhat romantic image promoted by the group belies the fact that most modern gypsy communities have resulted from involuntary displacement, not from innate wanderlust. Granted, like gypsy groups, the Living Theatre was often asked to leave town, usually by the authorities, and sometimes by irate local citizens. However, this was typically less a matter of being on the receiving end of ethnic persecution than it was deliberate provocation by the group. At the very least, the group's disposition towards local communities in Europe (and later Brazil) suggests marked naïveté about, if not outright disrespect for, local custom, as if everyone everywhere had read, or should have read, Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and Laing's *The Politics of Experience*.

Instead, it is more prudent to view the group as an idiosyncratic pseudo-commune that evolved over time. Its full-time communalism in Europe from 1964 onwards was prefaced by earlier experiences in New York that were conducive to developing a communal identity. Lack of financial security helped in this regard. More than once (i.e., the One Hundred Street loft and the Fourteenth Street Theatre) what was intended as a performance space became an open house for theatre group members and associates with nowhere else to live or nowhere better to go. Furthermore, work on *The Brig*, paradoxically, because of its stark but highly disciplined inhumanity on stage and an equally demanding rehearsal process, brought the group closer together, both in having to operate like a well-oiled machine and in giving each other support during 'down time' in the gruelling rehearsals. This bonding was further assisted by the communal use of drugs such as hashish and marijuana, which tended to reduce concern about control and organisation. After departure from America in 1964 the group lived communally as a matter of choice and necessity, and it was often

billeted within existing communal groups in different cities. For better or worse, it eschewed any recognised or recognisable communal model and it deliberately chose an 'outcast' role.

By conventional independent theatre company standards the size of the group seems unremarkable. Group size was generally between 25 and 35 adults in the 1960s. Most members would participate in major productions such as *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Now* on any given occasion. While it is not unusual to find more than thirty people involved in the running of a local theatre, what differentiates the Living Theatre is that the total group was also the notional total performing cast. The idea of some 30 performers on stage at once, in more or less equal roles, would normally pose major challenges in staging. Yet, despite the many other logistical problems that faced the Living Theatre, the matter of getting the whole group on stage and performing in unison does not seem to have been a major issue; members seem to have co-operated without dissent.

Part of the explanation for this is that the demographic composition of the Living Theatre was relatively streamlined. In essence, a core of veterans was surrounded by many young people with sympathetic moral and political values. Actors such as James Anderson had substantial film and theatre acting experience, as had Jenny Hecht. Steven Ben Israel had cut his teeth as a comic performer in the same venues as Lenny Bruce. Anderson and Rufus Collins were African American. When based in Europe the group attracted many different European nationals as members. It also sought to integrate Moroccan performers when resident in Tangiers, and Argentinian and Brazilian performers when resident in Sao Paulo in 1970-71. And although Beck and Malina were both in their forties in the mid-1960s, their views were consistent with a general anti-Establishment mood amongst the younger generation.

On top of this, and despite its non-conformist exterior, the Living Theatre was always a magnet for intellectuals and thinkers. Beck and Malina tirelessly cultivated an intellectual clientele wherever they went. This undercurrent of intellectualism, and continuous rhetorical efforts on the part of the group's founders, helps explain how a relatively large group of performers could work together in such relative synchronisation.

Unlike traditional nomadic communities, but consistent with many hippie communes, the group was also highly permeable. Members could come and go freely, there were no auditions, as such, and the main criterion for membership, if Beck is to be believed, was a willingness to live in poverty as much as any interest in theatre. The division of labour (and payment) was relatively egalitarian. Indeed, the Living Theatre gave a strong impression that all labour was shared equally in creating and performing the major works of the mid-to-late 1960s period. Since there were no auditions as such from 1964 onwards, it was no doubt easier to maintain an egalitarian approach to acting. Technical work was approached in the much the same way. Similarly, the group strove to create works collectively. This was proudly demonstrated by the

publication of extracts from the 'Paradise Now Notes' in *The Drama Review* (Living Theatre [1969]). Members had the choice of participating fully in the creating and performing of works if they wished, and they could choose whether they worked on-stage, off-stage, or both for any given production; circumstances usually dictated that members do the latter. The fluidity of membership and function within the group seems to have enabled rather than impeded its ability to get work done and reflects the basic appeal of less hierarchical, if not fully ultrademocratic, social formations in the 1960s.

Underscoring the open-door and equal opportunity philosophy there was a strong sense of family or kinship in the group as a whole. The fact that many children were born and at least partially raised within the group is evidence of this kinship spirit. Against this atmosphere of familial concern was the expectation that members travel and perform at any cost, even in circumstances that threatened their physical health. The American tour of late 1968, where most of the group was struck by illness, such as influenza, yet where there was no provision for health insurance or medical costs, demonstrates the shallowness of the kin spirit. In this particular instance one could argue that the Living Theatre should have temporarily dissolved or otherwise gone into retreat prior to the American tour in order to further deflect or defuse its precarious financial situation. The financial returns from the tour hardly seemed worth the stress that it placed upon the group and there was attrition of members as the tour progressed. However, against this phenomenon is a pattern of return to the group in subsequent years, suggesting that for some, at least, it really was a surrogate for the family experience. Indeed, in keeping with many retreat communities, the group seems to have been very insular at certain points, taking few cues from outside. This may explain the doggedness of some its actions and decisions.

In any case, the group existed throughout the 1960s as a debt-ridden institution. It received virtually no public arts funding and only fitfully made profits on productions. While the hand-to-mouth existence of the group, especially when it toured America and members were on occasion given an allowance of only \$1.50 a day, caused obvious distress, it also helped to unify the group, as the testimony from the Heist-sur-Mer experience of 1964-65 demonstrated. This sense of sacrifice, as Kanter argues, is fundamental to group solidarity, and Beck seems to have relied heavily on this principle in keeping the group together.

All in all, the Living Theatre maintained itself as a total entity; one had to swallow the Living Theatre whole, so to speak. Certainly, there were a number of one-off protests, lecture-demonstrations, free performances, and guest appearances, but the principal way to experience the group's work was through a major production. When the group toured, even in the early 1960s while still based in New York, it was as a large entourage. Small touring units or sub-groups do not seem to have been used by the Living Theatre. For argument's sake, a stationary theatre and a touring theatre could have co-existed. Indeed, it was this all-or-nothing philosophy that prompted Joe Chaikin to establish the Open Theatre in 1963, because he thought

it more important to work permanently in New York. Furthermore, training classes for outsiders faded from the agenda of the Living Theatre after the early 1960s.

Whether or not there was, despite great rhetorical efforts on many fronts, *de facto*, a social hierarchy in the group is a more vexing question. In principle, it was a completely non-hierarchical group and it is evident that people were allowed to express opinions and put forward ideas about what to perform, how to perform, and where to perform. Michael Smith, a New York theatre critic who was free-lancing in Europe (mainly for *The Village Voice*) in late 1966 and who compiled his reviews, interviews, and diary entries into a book entitled *Theatre Trip* (1969), provides an insider account of life with the Living Theatre in Europe from September through November 1966. The narrative takes in rehearsals for *Antigone*, and performances of *The Brig*, *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, and *Frankenstein*. Also included are interviews with core members of the Living Theatre: Rufus Collins, William Shari, Henry Howard, Luke Theodore, Roy Harris and Peter Hartman. All address the collective creation process and several talk of their (largely Off-Broadway) theatrical backgrounds, giving lie to the common charge that the Living Theatre was, apart from Beck and Malina, populated by people without training or any theatrical pedigree. Furthermore, one cannot dismiss as entirely disingenuous Malina and Beck's wishes to see the 'withering away of the director'. However, as critic Michael Smith noted in his travels with the group, and others such as Renfreu Neff have observed, there always seemed to be an inner core of management in the Living Theatre. It is tempting to conclude that a form of cognitive dissonance permeated the group: leadership of the group resided in Julian Beck, with Judith Malina as an extremely influential deputy. Few members, if any, seem to have seen the structure of the group in such stark terms at the time, nor have there been any public repudiations or denunciations subsequently.

#### Stage organisation

On-stage, with few exceptions, the group attempted to make each performer use his or her body sculpturally, often as parts of a larger whole. Single actors stepped or stood out from the larger entity mainly to emphasise a point about the vulnerability of the individual in modern society, as in *Frankenstein*, or that there are moments in time when crucial ethical decisions fall to individuals, as in *Antigone*. However, these moments are meant as correctives for the collective, which, as the Living Theatre believed, too often mutates into something inhuman under the influence of mammon. Normally, the collective is where the individual belongs.

There were no star actors, and on stage performers often appeared interchangeable. Actors were merely parts of the Creature, the World Prison, the Plague, the Rite of Universal Intercourse, and, ultimately, the beautiful, non-violent, anarchist revolution. One could argue that this shows how seriously the Living

Theatre took Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double* as its key dramatic handbook. Yet, while Artaud stresses the necessity of a Theatre of Cruelty the function of the actor *per se*, he does not give any direct instruction on 'how to be a group' on stage. He does, however, free the performer from logocentrism. The give and take of dialogue, the soliloquy, indeed most intelligible speech acts, are secondary matters for Artaud. The Living Theatre used this de-emphasis of 'the word' to create mass combinations of the human form as substitutions for text, turning the performers into a single organism or creature, as in *Frankenstein*, or as totems or even the cosmos in *Paradise Now*. When playing people, the performers were part of a larger group - victims, prisoners, meditators, priests, Vietcong guerrillas. This is evident in all four major productions from the mid-to-late 1960s, even in *Antigone*, where individual characters used normal dialogue, but were often borne on the shoulders of a larger group. The embodiment of the group on stage was most powerfully represented in the group 'chord' in *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, the moment of flight in Rung VII of *Paradise Now*, and the 'body piles' in both works. *Frankenstein* involved an attempt at levitation of one member by the rest of the group. To the extent that performer arrangement on stage was often thought of in terms of a contorted or deformed 'grouping', the Living Theatre maintained both Brecht's and Artaud's sense of the centrality of the ensemble.

Despite any appearances of cosmic inspiration or trance-like states as the source of unified actions and movements (e.g., the yogic and tantric routines in *Mysteries* and *Paradise Now*) these exercises required rehearsal and some degree of group discipline. Ironically, perhaps, the military group discipline begun with *The Brig*, a symptom of dehumanisation in Kenneth Brown's original play, appears to have been carried over into subsequent Living Theatre productions as a performance principle. From *Mysteries* onwards, however, the group seemed to delight in confounding any impressions of order by bringing unadorned and conspicuously ordinary-looking bodies to the stage. The bodies were not necessarily uncoordinated, but, at the very least they were stripped of uniformity. Nudity, paradoxically, seemed to be the ultimate leveller, and the Living Theatre made much of this tactic.

Language was similarly retained as a form of common property. Utterances were frequently restricted to declamations, shouts, cries, incantations, coming from disparate sources. Individual speeches were relatively rare, most often falling to veterans such as Steven Ben Israel, Henry Howard, and of course Beck and Malina, but they were intended as assertions of a political nature rather than as signs of individual characterisation.

This is not to say that the presentation of a mass of bodies writhing together on stage and chanting in unison was necessarily a sign of unflinching discipline and deep social cohesion. More seasoned performers and critics would have been able to distinguish between actions and oratory performed well or badly. Indeed, amateurism was a frequent taunt, something which Beck and Malina typically attempted to turn into a virtue by re-labelling it as subversive anti-theatricality. Despite the rationalisations offered by

group members, it seems reasonable to assume that a certain amount of content in the group's productions came from intuition rather than design. The most important point was to show, on stage, the power of the collective in as many permutations as possible, regardless of how well any particular sequence or scene worked as theatre. *Paradise Now*, for example, could have as many as 24 scenes on any given night, many of them lengthy mock-tribal rites. Whether some, if not all, of these rites reflected laziness, self-indulgence, or just busy-work in the absence of a focussed idea, remains a moot point.

Another on-stage tactic for showing the virtue of the group was sheer temporal endurance. Living Theatre works of the mid-to-late 1960s tended to be lengthy by conventional theatrical standards. Works like *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Now* often lasted several hours and they were sometimes performed on the same bill as works of moderate length such as *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* and *Antigone*. Sheer persistence in being present as a group before an audience would have had its own effect independently of the content of the work. The length of time before an audience would also have allowed for relationships, if not rapport, to develop between performers and audience, even if by a vociferous dialectical engagement rather than the sort of benign *communitas* sought by groups such as the Open Theatre and the Performance Group. The post-performance behaviour of the group was such that it often seemed like a continuation of the invocations of on-stage performance insofar as they kept, as has been mentioned, an open-door policy, inviting people back to their places of residence to continue discussions begun earlier in the proceedings. Immersion in the group experience could thus last for many hours on end.

Although the ritual nature of much of the stage work suggested little need for scripting, the fact remains that all of the performances of the 1960s by the Living Theatre were based on, or yielded, written performance texts. The notebooks for various works were assiduously kept, copied and archived. Beck and Malina were at great pains to demonstrate that works such as *Mysteries* and *Paradise Now* were works of collective creation. The 'Paradise Now Notes', show how group members contributed textual and visual content, Beck or Malina acting as scribes. The pair cultivated an image of facilitation of creative collaboration, but it is probably more correct to say that they encouraged group members to enrich their initiating concepts. Typically, the director/writer roles remained the preserve of the group's original founders.

In order to reinforce the impression of group solidarity on stage the Living Theatre used audience participation as a device, to the point of blurring the distinction between performers and audience members, especially when physical contact was involved. Interactions with the audience urged informality and direct conversation. Actors were given great latitude to be themselves and to pursue arguments, conversations, even amorous moments on and off the stage, especially with audience members. The structure of *Paradise Now* was such that after each Rite and Vision came an opportunity for an open-ended Action, put as a



question to all those present at the performance. If the audience did not want to go past a particular point, the action stayed there and whatever ensued was still framed, and often rationalised later, as theatre.

To this extent the Living Theatre was acting merely as a group within a group (those in the performance space altogether at that time) within a group (the sum total of humanity). However, this apparent humility and oceanic spirit was often contradicted by the patronising attitude of the Living Theatre towards the audience, e.g., the opening scene of *Paradise Now*, which implied that only the Living Theatre really knew how the structure of society worked and how to remedy it. Becoming the larger group was thus often predicated on terms set out in advance by the Living Theatre rather than an open forum that sought to draw out the experience of others. These latter aims, ironically, seem to have been met best by the Living Theatre when the group was not performing on stage.

#### Projection and reception

As implied by the comment made earlier concerning an apparent cognitive dissonance within the group about its internal social hierarchy, the matter of group perception amongst the members seems to have been relatively consistent. Whatever concrete indications there might have been to the contrary that Beck almost always controlled the financial decisions of the Living Theatre, comments in interviews and public statements suggest a firm belief by members that they were an egalitarian and wholly voluntaristic primary group. The disagreements that took place, such as the episode at Yale in late 1968, where Rufus Collins and other members showed themselves publicly and vociferously opposed to the pacifist positions being espoused by Malina and Beck, were, generally, matters of principle and politics, not disagreements about the merits of the group itself. They argued for a change in group orientation (e.g., follow the Black Panthers philosophy of violence, where necessary) rather than a change in structure.

Most observers, even where harshly critical of its stage work, as in the case of Stefan Brecht's reviews of the *Paradise Now* American tour productions, seemed convinced of its social cohesion. They did not reject outright the particular premise of 'collective creation' espoused by the Living Theatre, but found fault with the obstinate refusal to accept some basic assumptions of stagecraft such as casting people in key roles, where such roles existed, according to their abilities to perform well, or treating the audience with a modicum of respect. It was the extremity of the egalitarian philosophy as represented on stage that irritated observers, not that the group saw itself as a collective entity.

Beyond this lies something that in all probability can never be gauged in empirical terms. The impressions of solidarity and group cohesion that the group gave off to the younger members of the audience, many of whom, if Turner's analysis is correct, were there because they were driven more or less unconsciously by

some liminoid impetus towards *communitas*, were likely to have been very positive. For those wanting affirmation of the power of the group *per se*, if not a convincing demonstration of actorly skills by all its members, the Living Theatre, as Richard Neville and Jeff Nuttall have implied, were emblematic, and no doubt inspirational. The fact that the vast majority of these people did not become involved in radical theatre groups subsequently does not mean that they were not persuaded by the case for the group idea(l) as presented by the Living Theatre.

It is also evident that group members could be engaged with on or off stage. The group was the same on stage and off stage, there was to be no theatrical frame. If an audience member was sufficiently provoked by what was seen on stage s/he knew that there was ample opportunity to make contact with the group post-performance, or, if brave enough, s/he could interrupt the performance frame as the work was taking place. While this characteristic, the audience anticipating and appreciating a theatre group performing some sort of 'groupness', i.e., showing itself as an ensemble, is probably a constant in all types of theatre, it can often remain a matter of speculation, something one might marvel at with other theatre-goers at the end of a performance. The Living Theatre attempted to remove any doubts about the presence of groupness by foregrounding it consistently and denying that there was a difference between theatre and life.

It seems fair to say that, ultimately, this preoccupation with showing the power of the group in the context of theatrical performance was too overwhelming to work to great intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction. Neither Beck nor Malina ever fully renounced pretensions of making works of art. They also fought, along with other group members, for a number of causes, including peace, non-violence, the abolition of the death penalty, the rights of minorities, the rights of the individual, and mitigation, in general, of the increasing institutionalisation and deformation of the human spirit. These causes were clearly regarded as matters equally as crucial as the inherently beneficent power of the collective and comprised much of what was in these collectively created productions. However, the ensemble stage action often seems to have distracted or puzzled audiences rather than communicate succinctly these political positions. Indeed, perhaps their most satisfying works were the two more or less socially realistic and narratively conventional ones written for a small group of performers by out-of-group playwrights: Gelber's *The Connection* and Brown's *The Brig*. These commented upon the way people identify with, or are consigned, to particular groups, but they did not involve meta-narratives or metaphors about, say, 'the voyage of the many to the one and the one to the many' that was so central to *Paradise Now*. In other words, the most effective on-stage paradigm for the Living Theatre-as-group may have been the one that was discarded, from about 1965 onwards, when the self-conscious demonstration of 'groupishness' became a paramount concern and objective, at the expense of art and clear exposition of political principles.

## The San Francisco Mime Troupe

### Social organisation

The San Francisco Mime Troupe of the 1960s, particularly during the latter part of the decade, would have struck many uninformed observers as a hippie commune in the same mould as the Living Theatre of the *Paradise Now* period of 1968-70. Mime Troupe members wore the requisite colourful clothes and hairstyles, embraced the psychedelic music and drug culture and they featured prominently in the street parades, the pageants, and the protests of the Haight-Ashbury era. However, the social organisation of the Mime Troupe was not that of a hippie commune. Instead, it was much more a New Left service organisation ('Serve the People' was part of its credo), one with a clear didactic, emancipatory, and outwardly oriented agenda based on socialist and Marxist principles.

Much of this orientation came from the political views of the group's founder, R. G. Davis. Like Brecht, Davis thought it possible to fuse art and politics, and he seems to have been able to persuade most members of the Mime Troupe on this point. He also seems to have been successful in convincing his colleagues that the group must both establish a constituency and remain answerable to it, hence the concern to function as a theatre in the centre of a community and make the theatre, in a literal sense, a community centre. Despite any particular legal or financial pressures at a given time the Mime Troupe was never without a physical base that it could call home, and it went to great pains to make this home base available for use by other countercultural community groups, such as Students for a Democratic Society.

As actor-cum-director-cum-dramaturg Davis embraced the view that he should not ask of people what he could not do himself, and he encouraged people in the group to develop or practice their skills widely. At the centre of each production was a script, usually an adaptation of an existing text or collections of texts. In the early years of the Mime Troupe it was customary for particular individuals, whether insiders or sympatico consultant outsiders, to take primary responsibility, often in teams of two, for the adaptation of scripts. Indeed, there appears to have been an implicit, if not explicit, policy of role-rotation in regard to script production. There was never the same combination of script-workers from one production to the next. The composition of casts from one work to the next tended to remain more consistent, but overall there seems to have been fluidity in the division of labour. A performer in one production might be scriptwriter in the next, often through expression of interest or invitation rather than dictate by Davis.

However, Davis usually insisted on auditions for membership in order to determine performer potential, if not virtuoso actorly skill. The social organisation of the group was patently not radically egalitarian. Until 1969, at least, it was Davis who auditioned prospective members and it was Davis who made the key decisions as to what to perform, where to perform, who to set to particular writing and adaptation tasks within the group, and who to call in from outside for expert assistance. It was also Davis who had the

authority to dismiss people. Nevertheless, the Mime Troupe stopped short of being an autocratic institution ruled by one individual. People such as Sandy Archer, Peter Berg and Joan Holden held influential positions in the group, and it is clear that the Mime Troupe developed its own recruitment momentum in that it could reach a relatively large size without the 'old hands' having full control of the process. The Living Theatre shared this experience but Beck and Malina tended to be more sanguine about the matter than Davis. There were also many opportunities for side-projects within the overall structure of the Mime Troupe. Research for a particular production was often a matter of team effort. Davis used the Brechtian model of a small group of consultants, some from the permanent group, some more as affiliates or associates, as the basis for creating a production. Thus there was a group-within-a-group-within-a-group character to the way in which the Mime Troupe was organised.

Demographically, the Mime Troupe was more or less homogeneous in the 1960s. Davis was slightly older than most members, although, in the early 1960s, senior contributors such as Joe Bellan and were peppered throughout productions. For the most part the group was composed of young, white, middle-class liberals, many of them 'red-diaper' babies (the Bay Area was renowned for its class-consciousness). Despite a characteristic liberal sympathy for minority rights, and although *The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel* had three African American performers and three white performers, ethnically mixed casts were the exception rather than the rule until a pro-active policy of ethnic diversity was introduced in the 1970s. Self-appointed guerrilla theatre chronicler, John Weisman regarded them as an agreeable and sincere bunch of 'drop-outs'.

Impressions of group size in the Mime Troupe were often deceptive. Davis names over 200 people as contributors in his 1975 monograph on the Mime Troupe, no doubt in order to make a political point about the level of community support for the group. Even so, the total membership list in early 1967 was around 60. The average was probably closer to half that figure. However, even this is misleading. As noted elsewhere, the number of performers in any given major production typically ranged from seven to ten, with four to five people in technical support roles. These numbers were often reduced for touring purposes. Effectively, then, there was always a relatively small group at work on any key production. Many members contributed to more peripheral Mime Troupe activities, such as the Gorilla Marching Band, and the Gutter Puppets. These sometimes accompanied a Commedia park performance by the core Mime Troupe cast, or a street event organised by other community or Movement organisations. On some occasions several units were in operation at the same time. Furthermore, the size of the group, when it did reach large numbers, was often a cause of concern for financial and organisational purposes, prompting Davis to cull numbers formally on at least one occasion, as in April 1967.

That many people came and went in the Mime Troupe is evident from the long personnel list covering its first decade. This gives lie to the notion that the Davis-era Mime Troupe was something of a coterie of

virtuoso performers. The changing cast compositions from one show to the next and/or the relatively frequent switching of function by members from acting to production suggests that there was something more of a jobbing-as-required attitude overall.

Remuneration of individuals was generally on a more egalitarian basis than key decisions regarding productions or day-to-day matters. Star salaries were non-existent and the wages for 'senior management', such as Davis and Archer, were negligibly greater than average and even then in only a few instances. The Mime Troupe received virtually no public arts funding and, apart from occasional sell-outs, such as *The Minstrel Show*, and *L'Amant Militaire*, it had to rely on passing the hat in parks and more modest returns from the annual college circuit tours to maintain viability. Performers often got less than \$30 per week as a wage. This joint sense of sacrifice, as with the Living Theatre, no doubt helped to unite the group.

The Mime Troupe began regular tours from the mid-1960s, partly as a means of supplementing the modest, donation-based income from park performances in the Bay Area, but also to 'spread the radical political word' and to show that the group was active on more than a stationary theatre front. Such tours tended to be regional rather than nation-wide and did not involve the entire group. This allowed other members to concentrate on rehearsing or presenting work in the Bay Area while a tour was running.

Mime Troupe members frequently shared apartments, but there was no specific policy on communal living, nor was there a single Mime Troupe Haight-Ashbury mansion (cf. acid-rock band the Grateful Dead's house at 710 Ashbury Street), and no living quarters were attached to the facilities rented by the group. The Digger element in the Mime Troupe, which did not take long to dissociate itself from the group, seems to have been more enthusiastic for communal living. Some set up, or joined, city communes and/or moved on to rural communes following their departure from the Mime Troupe and the dissolution of the Diggers.

#### Stage organisation

For the Mime Troupe, any sense of on-stage group identity was communicated with more subtlety than, say, the Living Theatre. Whether using the half-mask of Commedia, the make-up of minstrelsy, hand-puppets or giant puppets, heavy stylisation tended to mask the identities of individual performers. Photographs of the Mime Troupe of the 1960s depict figures, not actors. The audience had to guess who the real African American performers were in *The Minstrel Show*. The Gorilla Marching Band and other guerrilla theatre adjuncts to the Troupe implicitly endorsed activist groups as group models. At the same time, these units also demonstrated that working together could and should involve laughter and fun, as did the main Mime Troupe, which lost little opportunity in poking fun at itself.

Importantly, and eschewing cosmic notions of a higher, larger, collectivity, the Mime Troupe emphasised the importance of the very small group. An organised guerrilla group, as Castro had demonstrated in Cuba, could be a powerful agent of change in society. Guerrilla theatre, compact, disciplined, mobile, and flexible, was the best embodiment of the group, and the Mime Troupe promoted this image across all its activities.

This points to an important distinction between the Mime Troupe and other radical theatre groups such as the Living Theatre and the Performance Group. Clearly, the use of humour and songs in warm-ups acted to bind performers and audience together as a larger group, but the rules of engagement were always maintained: the Mime Troupe, when it was in performance mode proper, was there to teach, and the audience was there to learn. The group shunned completely any notion of psychological realism, communion, either in individual performance, or between actors, or between actors and audience. It rarely strayed from the use of mask, costume, and stylised gesture to denote the performer very clearly as performer, always keeping the audience at arm's length. This was partly a matter of principle, since at all times the distance between the actor and the role had to be maintained so that the dialectical meaning of the play, following Marx and Brecht, could be kept in the foreground. It was also very difficult to indulge in confiding behaviour in a noisy public space. Essentially, however, it was a matter of controlling the situation. While the Mime Troupe often used physical warm-ups, musical interludes or breaks, hat-passing, humorous harangues, political debates, and other interventions around the main presentation in order to break the performance frame, and to show the ordinary, non-mystifying, non-threatening reality of the performers as fellow human beings, the action was always defined in advance by the Mime Troupe.

Similarly, the Mime Troupe did not usually engage in lengthy performances. This was partly due to the fact that most of its shows were in the open air, where the window of performance opportunity was generally smaller. Ambient events could easily disrupt proceedings, or at the very least make them difficult to hear. Just as importantly, and in keeping with the guerrilla ethos, short sharp interventions were preferable to situations that might engender distracting feelings of familiarity. Answering directly to its constituency was primarily an off-stage matter. The Mime Troupe routinely previewed its work before community groups in order to get constructive feedback, but it never affected to being an open community or a communal experiment.

This being said, the group deliberately used outdoor venues as an act of inclusiveness. The audience was already 'at home', and both performers and audience shared the same fresh air. Similarly, the group offered its offices and studios as a community base for other groups. The Mime Troupe wanted to show that it was part of the neighbourhood. This is fundamentally different, however, from attempting to present itself on stage as a group to be emulated or a model of social organisation.

Overall, and guerrilla theatre rhetoric aside, it seems reasonable to suggest that the San Francisco Mime Troupe did not seek to embody a particular group ideal on stage in its main productions except by way of reference to class interests. Apart from the blatantly false nature of sets, props and costumes, the positioning of actors on remained relatively conventional. Chorus work was not given special treatment to make the collective appear more virtuous, unless dictated by the text or a playwright such as Brecht. Messages about the good of the collective versus the selfish individual and the importance of co-operation amongst oppressed minorities tended to be delivered through speech. In other words, while the Mime Troupe could easily have mimed a group ideal on stage, it consciously chose not to do so, relying more upon dialectical materialism than kinesthetic processes to make its point about the value of collective behaviour.

### Projection and reception

The Mime Troupe made no claim to being the same on-stage as off-stage nor did they reject the notion of a performance space with clearly demarcated boundaries. When the Mime Troupe performed its major Commedia works and other adaptations in Bay Area parks it brought with it the bare essentials of a recognised stage setting: a wooden stage, curtains, flats, banners and other props. The spontaneous improvisation or appropriation of a space took place only in the Mime Troupe's smaller guerrilla theatre projects. Generally, then, and despite the absence of walls of a building, there was still a fourth wall between audience and performers. Audience members were expected to observe, more or less passively, the masked figures on stage following their set routines and spectators could join in only when cued to do so. To intrude directly into the stage space was an act of defiance (or intoxication).

Members retained their private lives and identities. This is not to say that individual performers did not gain reputations as Mime Troupe actors and did not mingle in the general countercultural community. Indeed, members were often, in their own way, celebrities in the Bay Area, and they occasionally made the headlines in East Coast theatrical and political commentaries. Furthermore, despite efforts to deflect gratuitous interest in the group itself, it is likely that the Mime Troupe created a strong impression within the counterculture of group solidarity. In other words, to aspiring young radicals they probably came across as a group of hip young provocateurs worthy of emulation.

Critical reception to the Mime Troupe seems to reflect a basic respect for the overarching socialist philosophy the group espoused, and theatre critics routinely acknowledged the Movement status of the Mime Troupe irrespective of their views on the merits of a particular production (this trend continues to the present). The question as to whether or not the Troupe was an effective group, in theatrical terms, on stage is a more challenging matter. Critics often found fault with the lack of polish or depth in specific works,

begging the question as to whether or not greater effort should have been devoted to establishing a more modestly scaled unit of permanent membership.

## The Performance Group

### Social organisation

There were occasions, such as the nude sequences in *Dionysus in 69* and *Paradise Now*, when the Performance Group and the Living Theatre seemed virtually indistinguishable from each other. At a distance they all looked like flower children. The basic demography was similar, although the Performance Group seems to have had the narrower demography: young, intellectual, middle-class people, but all with aspirations to being professional performers. Schechner, the group's founder, was older than the other members by a few years, and as with the founders of the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, he had a substantial theatre background. Yet the social organisation of the Performance Group was markedly different from that of either the Living Theatre or the San Francisco Mime Troupe in terms of scale. The Performance Group was altogether much smaller. It typically had around 12 members in the 1967-70 period, and, of these, not all were core performers.

The Performance Group was also different in that membership was governed by a legal constitution, drafted to suit Schechner's aims. Over time, his individual authority came under considerable pressure, but in early incarnations of the Performance Group, he effectively controlled entry. Would-be members almost always had to audition to join the group. The choice of what to perform was largely Schechner's. He might confer with existing members before making a decision and occasionally yield to the majority view, but key decisions, such as the choice to stage *Makbeth*, remained Schechner's.

Schechner also took primary responsibility for scripting, at least until *Commune*, although performers were encouraged to insert or develop 'actuals' or strips of action when *Dionysus in 69* and *Makbeth* were being created. Nevertheless, as Schechner sought to remind the group on at least one occasion, the performers were there first and foremost to perform plays and take direction. Schechner's approach to casting in *Dionysus* was to suggest the person he believed would be most suitable for a particular role and then let the performers decide more or less amongst themselves. His view, understandably, carried greater weight than any other individual member.

In terms of financial independence the Performance Group fared at least as well, if not better, than the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Initially, Schechner underwrote some of the group's costs. Its first production, *Dionysus in 69*, turned out to be highly profitable and this gave the Performance Group the appearance of a relatively autonomous Off-Off Broadway theatre. However, as Schechner averred on a number of



occasions, much of the group's income and resourcing came from his ability to work the system, particularly the college system, to the group's advantage, whether by indirect subsidy from his New York University professor's salary, or through angling strategically for residencies at other campuses. On average, though, the group fared almost as modestly as the Mime Troupe, and again, this could have had a unifying, rather than undermining, effect, assuming that Kanter's analysis of commitment mechanisms in communes is correct.

The Performance Group, like the Living Theatre, did not create any parallel sub-units. This was probably influenced by the terms of employment for group members, who were employed to work first and foremost on plays. Performance Group actors were, initially at least, paid a reasonable wage for their work. It probably seemed equitable to keep guerrilla activities and involvement in sundry countercultural causes outside the working environment. Even so, there seems to have been an extra layer of expectation from Schechner, at least, that actors devote themselves, like Grotowski's actors, to the group and to the work at hand out of a philosophical belief in the power of theatre, rather than agree to disciplined work only for financial reasons. The Performance Group, in my view, stands out as the group in which actors and director accepted equally that theatre was a serious calling, culturally and professionally.

Although the Performance Group, as a name, could belong anywhere, it is worth noting that, of the three groups, this group appeared to value its performing environment much more highly. The conversion of the former industrial space at 33 Wooster Street was carried out by group members, and battles were fought over occupancy rights when the group disintegrated in 1970. The Wooster Group, an outgrowth of the Performance Group containing two members from its 1970 reincarnation, remains in residence today. To this extent the Performance Group embedded itself in a locality, i.e., SoHo. Perhaps SoHo, like Greenwich Village and the East Village, offered liminoid 'star-groupers', as Turner has described those brought together in contemporary social dramas, a sense of *communitas* and community.

Yet the Performance Group members did not live communally. Exceptions arose when college residencies out of New York City were offered, but the group pattern was for pair-bonds to cohabit, including Richard Schechner and Joan McIntosh, the latter pair's apartment acting as an alternative main gathering point to the Performing Garage venue.

With regard to touring, the Performance Group was not a regular travelling unit, and when it did tour, no specific point was made of moving around together as an entourage. The group toured the East Coast and the Mid-West, but with the exception of a residency in Vancouver in 1972, it did not tour the West Coast. Like the Mime Troupe, the Performance Group played most of its out-of-town tour shows at college theatres. The group seemed to prefer using its home performance space where possible. It more or less cloistered itself for long periods of time, emerging for wider community interaction in the latter stages of

rehearsal, suggesting that it saw itself as a self-sufficient organisation, if not a type of theatrical holy order in the mould of Grotowski's Polish Laboratory Theatre.

### Stage organisation

The Performance Group had no reservations about presenting itself on stage as a unified entity. Its approach to embodying the group was consonant with that of the Living Theatre. Where the Living Theatre grouped physically for the Rite of Universal Intercourse in *Paradise Now*, the Performance Group did the same for the Total Caress in *Dionysus in 69*. Where Living Theatre performers built the Creature with their bodies in *Frankenstein*, Performance Group members became the primal uterus in *Dionysus in 69*, and the silent, menacing, creepy-crawly Organism in *Commune*. Group rituals reinforced the impression of the power of the group and created opportunities for *communitas* to be observed and, on occasions, directly experienced by audience members.

Furthermore, the stage was explicitly a site for group therapy. Experiments with physical nakedness and psychological confrontation between cast members helped the performers break the theatrical frame of personal and private life. The stage, as in therapeutic group settings, functioned as a site for self-expression and confession. Performers were encouraged to make autobiographical interpolations within or alongside other textual materials and to comment on the way a particular production was progressing.

Audience participation was actively encouraged on more than just one level. Spectators could join in the ritual aspects of the work, and they were also encouraged to make moral choices that would influence the way a performance was played out. The group made use of the performance space as a total three-dimensional environment in order to problematise the distinction between audience and performers – it frequently created sub-groups within the audience, or temporary alliances between a few performers and audience members.

The emphasis upon creating physical theatre in the style of Grotowski required at least as much focus upon the physical body as upon the text. Even when performers were not grouped together on stage as a single organism, a high degree of group discipline was required. Actors were also expected to be able to change roles during the course of a season. All of this added to a sense that the Performance Group was a cohesive group entity rather than simply an assemblage of aspiring Off-Broadway stars.

The Performance Group used physical warm-ups or psychophysical exercises at the start of some performances to naturalise the bodies of performers for the audience. In terms of words and speech, unlike the Living Theatre, which tended to direct speech outwardly, in polemical terms, provoking an audience response, the Performance Group, particularly in *Dionysus in 69*, very deliberately engaged in personal and

named exchange between cast members. In some cases, personal biographical information was used by one performer to gain ascendancy over another, even at the risk of humiliating or incapacitating a fellow group member. Indeed, much of William Shephard's account of his experience in *The Dionysus Group* relates to his continual struggle, in the role of Pentheus, to fend off personal attacks and taunts on him, as the private individual William Shephard, from Dionysus and other cast members. As a matter of principle both the Living Theatre and the Performance Group were prepared to allow for the audience to take the stage and break the theatrical frame, whether physically or verbally, even if this changed the action or sequence rehearsed by group members.

The Performance Group also used a community-fabricating tactic similar to that used by the Living Theatre. Shows could be interrupted for hours at a time while performers resolved points of conflict with each other or with the audience, or audience members resolved points of conflict with other audience members. In some respects this did transform the Performing Garage into the Greek *polis*. It was, for a few hours at least, a meeting place for dialectical exchange.

This being said, the Performance Group, like the Mime Troupe, maintained the overall definition of any performance situation. The performers more or less knew what was coming. This does not mean that the group was not interested in knowing how its work was perceived as theatre or that it could not take advice. Like the Mime Troupe, the Performance Group previewed its work for feedback from critical sources, most often theatre students and other theatre practitioners in the case of the Performance Group. In fact the Performance group seems to have been most conscientious in presenting work in progress to other groups. Given the academic milieu in which Schechner remained involved at all times, this was a relatively easy and logical option. Like the Living Theatre, the Performance Group invited ecstatic audience participation, at least in *Dionysus in 69*, and the group built in opportunities for new audience-led moments - in *Dionysus in 69* if a woman in the audience would go with Pentheus, he was saved, and the show was ended, and in *Commune* an audience group was made hostage and other audience members had a hand in their fate. The audience was permitted to bring the play to a halt. To varying degrees, all three groups expected works in repertory to change markedly over time, whether as a result of audience response, outside advice, or internal review of what was working and what was not.

#### Projection and reception

The Performance Group enjoyed relatively limited exposure in the wider countercultural community, at least by comparison with the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and more street-oriented groups such as Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre. Even today, non-theatre people are more likely to have heard of the Living Theatre and the Mime Troupe than the Performance Group (as I

discovered when explaining the nature of my dissertation to various individuals). In the radical theatre community the situation was, and is, different. The Performance Group, rather as Schechner intended, one imagines, has come to occupy an iconic and influential position. Some of this status must be attributed to Schechner's tendency to include, by way of example, a great deal of Performance Group history in his performance theory texts. Beyond that, however, there seems to be an intrinsic appeal. The kind of work carried out by the Performance Group is well suited to the work of small groups.

Furthermore, the key texts for performance were later edited and published by Schechner, and *Dionysus in 69* was filmed by a future Hollywood film director and released in a 16mm print. Neither the Living Theatre, after 1964 at least (*Paradise Now* is the exception), nor the San Francisco Mime Troupe, treated their texts with such sustained attention. It was one thing to document the work but only the Performance Group productions were re-packaged and/or dissected by its creators. While there was no doubt a self-serving aspect to such efforts, it also demonstrates that there was a sense of obligation to other radical theatre groups.

This principle seems to have gained acceptance amongst audiences and critics alike. In the same way that critics could respect the political convictions of the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe yet still pronounce a particular production a failure, the Performance Group commanded a fundamental respect for its experimental outlook and its emphasis on co-ordination and collaboration as a group of performers. Even if the production failed to convince overall, there were compelling group moments which trained and untrained theatre observers alike seem to have appreciated.

### Group paradigm comparisons

#### Group typologies

So far in this chapter I have discussed the ways in which the three theatre groups were organised as if what they did was more or less a matter of deliberate choice on the part of those involved. Recalling the group typologies derived in Chapters Two and Three it is now possible to attempt to gauge correspondences between the three groups and these typologies. In other words, How do the three theatre groups compare with basic attributes that may be more or less universal for all groups and with the more unconscious ideas about groups that were at play in the 1960s?

Building upon the illustrative format used in Chapters Two and Three it is now possible to add three more rows to the group typological table (see Table 7.1 on page 241).

Table 7.1 Comparison of group typologies with the three theatre groups

Group Type	Degree of voluntarism	Leadership attitude	Egalitarian beliefs	Need for group boundary	Attitude to larger society	Need for member 'authenticity'
Basic Assumption (Bion)	Low (often a therapeutic construction)	Highly ambivalent	Highly ambivalent	Low but increases as group 'ages'	Neutral	Low
Presentation Team (Goffman)	Low (contingent e.g. workplace entity)	Neutral	Neutral	Low	Neutral	Low
Commitment maintenance (Kanter)	High	Highly positive	Positive, but not anti-hierarchical	High	Hostile	Moderate
Liminoid star group (Turner)	High	Ambivalent	Ambivalent	High	Alienated	High
Hippie communes	High	Highly ambivalent	Highly anti-hierarchical	Low	Hostile or wary	High
Civil rights/New Left groups	High	Guarded acceptance	Positive, but not entirely anti-hierarchical	Low	Ambivalent	Low
Manson-type Messianic cults	Difficult to define	Highly positive	Complete deference to leader	Extremely high	Hostile	High
Urban guerrilla groups (e.g., Weather Underground)	High	Hostile	Highly anti-hierarchical	High	Hostile	High
Living Theatre	High	Highly ambivalent	Highly ambivalent	Low	Alienated/ hostile	High on and off stage
San Francisco Mime Troupe	High	Highly ambivalent	Highly ambivalent	Low	Alienated/ hostile	Low (if Diggers excluded)
Performance Group	High	Highly ambivalent	Highly ambivalent	High	Alienated	High, but stage-based

The initial *caveat* in Chapter Two notwithstanding, i.e., that a table such as this is intended as an indicative tool rather than a conclusive evaluative framework, a number of points seem to have emerged. Firstly, it is evident that the three theatre groups differ from one another, principally in terms of boundary/entry issues and expectations about the transparency of self of any group member. Secondly, there appears to be no exact fit between any of the theatre groups and one particular typology.

There are, however, some clear patterns. As suggested in Chapter Two, the type of performance team that Goffman describes, such as a normal workplace group of employees, is far from the type of group dynamic that was held in high regard within countercultural circles in the 1960s. Goffman's team is a form of antithesis, then, and this can be seen in the above table. Only the San Francisco Mime Troupe, with its customary lack of interest in having the actors 'be themselves' at all times, shows any overlap with the Goffman model.

In terms of positive correlations, each theatre group shares with all the other types of groups, except the Bion and Goffman types, a principle of joining the group through free choice. From there, however, the correlations are more complicated. Overall, each of the three theatres appears, typologically, to be an

amalgam of Bion's basic assumption group, Turner's liminoid star group, and the more general countercultural hippie communes of the 1960s.

In order to better understand the complexities of these typologies, and before drawing some final conclusions, it is helpful, in my view, to summarise some of the overarching themes or tensions that appear to have governed the idea(l) of the group in the 1960s. These are as follows: ultrademocratic deformations of the group ideal; the leadership dilemma; pair-bond concerns; fight/flight responses to external conditions; and, fight/flight responses to internal concerns (other than leadership and pair-bond matters).

### Ultrademocratic deformations of the group ideal

Because of the historical circumstances of the 1960s, from which no group would ever have been completely immune, the three theatre groups were required to wrestle with the ultrademocratic impetus. This is the most fundamental point of similarity between the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group: the great promise of the group, either as a community service organisation, or as a *communitas*-affirming entity, or both, was tainted by misgivings about leadership *per se*. Like Bion's basic assumption group, which, it is important recall, he argues is latent within almost any group, and in which he deliberately places the leader in an ambiguous position, the theatre groups experienced great discomfort when mixed signals circulated about where their founders stood in relation to other members. Taking their cues from the norms of the time the founders all paid lip service, at the very least, to the notion of the withering away of the director. This was bound to be both exciting and unsettling, opening up opportunities for anxious or displacing behaviour along the lines that Bion describes. In the case of each group, a deformation of the group ideal seems to have resulted from this anxiety.

The San Francisco Mime Troupe and groups anchored in the New Left, notably the Weathermen, shared a basic belief in an external oppressive social and political order, one that had to be resisted. Yet this was not to be achieved by any new cults of individual leadership and it produced a contradictory call for Maoism without Mao, or the revolution without Ché or Castro. As Davis's position as founder/leader grew more objectionable to other members, the Mime Troupe experimented with new leadership structures, instituting an Inner Core of five people in the latter part of 1968 as a substitute measure, but this initiative proved unsatisfactory. Either way, it seemed that Davis had to go. Despite perceptions that he was an autocratic leadership figure, he appears to have accepted his fate much in the spirit of the times. He went on leave and, and to the surprise of many, did not return. The Mime Troupe operated briefly as a leaderless communist collective after the departure of Davis and Archer, and then seems to have reverted to a less dogmatic socialist outlook. By the late 1970s, when the tide of ultrademocracy had retreated, Joan Holden and Dan Chumley had quietly emerged as the new leaders (even if this has remained something implicitly, rather than explicitly understood in subsequent years). The Mime Troupe exemplified the problem of

normative *communitas* in liminoid settings: What kinds of rules and who decides in the quest for a non-oppressive perduring new system?

The second type of deformation, and this was embodied by the Living Theatre, was that produced by a special blend of anarchism and individualism that privileged existential and ideological, often utopian, *communitas*, and attempted to strongly delimited the normative, or potentially more coercive, day-to-day rule-bound dimension. Nothing should compromise the potential of the individual to live a life of freedom. The Living Theatre, and to some extent the San Francisco Digger Mime Troupe off-shoot, celebrated the principle of 'do your thing' in great earnest but at the same time proposed 'Paradise Now' as a collective utopian vision. For all the latitude given to self-expression by such groups, the elaborate rite-vision-action architecture of the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now*, for example, betrays an underlying belief in order and sequence in achieving enlightenment.

The third type of deformation, embodied in the Performance Group, was less focussed on the details of the existing external social order. It eschewed a recognisable analytical framework, Marxist, anarchist, or otherwise, as a tool to understand and transform the social order. The goal was to return to *communitas* in more or less existential terms, rather than to create new, enduring social structures above the level of the affinity group or the liminoid star group. If there was an appeal at all to a larger model of community, it was to the notion of the Greek *polis*, but only insofar as it brought the citizenry together in a common place. It was sufficient to reclaim *communitas* through ritual, including the secular ritual of theatre. This had the advantage of maintaining a certain purity. It was less prey to contamination by the cynical political structures of the present, transporting the audience and performer to the *polis* where a meeting could take place between actors and audience. The principal difficulty with this was that it was both nostalgic in its view of the *polis*, and, in the case of the Performance Group, it was also suffused with an agonistic view of group life – the group was a place of war as much as harmony.

### Leadership dilemmas

Malina and Beck seemed to command a great deal of loyalty from Living Theatre members. There was no open revolt, as was the case in both the Mime Troupe and the Performance Group, and even when people left, many later returned. Nevertheless, much of the decision-making in the group appears to have been in the hands of Beck, particularly in regard to finances and arranging appearances. Malina was the key directorial figure, and both Beck and Malina did most of the work when it came to the actual writing or adaptation of material. They appear to have been non-coercive in their approach to leadership. They also did not ask performers to do anything they would not do themselves and frequently appeared on stage with the group.

Both Davis and Schechner seem to have sympathised with the principles of participatory democracy, but both were equally suspicious of attempts to do away with hierarchical structures entirely. They both behaved autocratically as directors at several points in the 1960s. Whether they considered the theatre groups to be their theatre groups any more than Beck and Malina believed the Living Theatre to be theirs is a moot point, however. Both Davis and Schechner dismissed members, but not without some soul-searching, and some of their published writings are circumspect and self-critical. Like Beck and Malina, Schechner took primary responsibility for script adaptation and development. Davis tended to work in small collaborative teams, often with people external to the central membership of the group, and he regularly performed on stage with other members of the Mime Troupe.

In all three groups it appears that many of the decisions taken by the leaders came after extensive face-to-face discussions. This is abundantly clear because a significant proportion of the archival material for each group comprises internal correspondence, often mimeographed notes, about rehearsal processes, ideas for new productions, and the general mood of the groups. To this extent some of Davis's and Schechner's directorial notes are almost interchangeable – the workings of the groups seem always to have been a matter for group discussion.

Similarly, there seems to have been a generic collaborative approach to the early stages of creating works, including group discussions about themes, research by individual members which was then pooled, and the contribution of particular staging ideas by people as scenes developed. Votes were taken on certain issues. Some of the published production texts were collectively authored (usually edited or transcribed by the leaders). There were also numerous interviews with, or articles by, founders that dealt explicitly with the subject of working collectively. To this extent, the groups seem to have functioned more as democracies rather than autocracies.

In each group, a crisis point was reached at virtually the same historical moment – late 1969 – where group leadership issues precipitated dissolution and reconstruction, albeit in different ways. Ironically, it was R.G. Davis of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, rather than Beck, Malina, or Schechner, who most quickly 'withered away' as director. The others returned to, or reconstructed, their groups, and exerted strong influences over them in subsequent years.

In the case of the Living Theatre, Beck and Malina affected to disappear as leaders in the early part of 1970 as part of an equal, four cell sub-dividing process, only to re-emerge, with veteran members re-joining, as the Living Theatre in 1971. It was to some degree an appropriate and understandable 'knight's move' in the climate of non-leadership at that time. When the dust had settled, Beck and Malina were more or less reinstated as leaders. Indeed, Malina has remained a leader up until the present.



Schechner remained leader, or at least co-director, of the Performance Group until 1979-80. It is difficult to imagine, given his earlier preoccupations with group rules and roles, that he would have been as casual in organisational outlook as Beck or Malina during this ten-year period, although he was clearly attempting to check his self-confessed controlling tendencies in the latter days of the *Commune*-era Performance Group. Ultimately, and depending upon how one reads Schechner's accounts of the fortunes of the Performance Group in the 1970s, particularly around the staging of Genet's *The Balcony* (1979), one could argue that Schechner allowed himself to wither away as leader at the end of the 1970s (Schechner 1982: 34-9; 1985: 260-93). At the very least, he was more philosophical at this point than had been the case at the end of the 1960s when he fought publicly and privately to maintain control of the group.

#### Pair-bonds within the groups

Bion argues that a characteristic response to the existential anxiety of finding oneself in a group that seems to have, as a major part of its purpose, the exploration of what it is to be a group, is to seek signs of health, particularly in the form of pair-bonds within the group. One could argue that at certain points in its history, particularly in its earliest years in New York, the Living Theatre *was* the pair-bond between Judith Malina and Julian Beck. While it may have been an unconventional bond, as Tytell's book reminds us in vivid detail, it was also extremely stable. Malina and Beck, by their own admission, functioned both as leaders and parents for the group, even though this conflicted with their own putatively anarchist beliefs. Considered in terms of Bion's basic-assumption group, one could argue that this stable pair-bond helped the group to deflect anxiety about leadership whenever the leaders affected to be 'withering away'.

Furthermore, one does not have to subscribe to Bion's interpretation of group life to see the importance of such a bond. It is mutual trust and support that make the pair-bond robust, and evidence of that is a sufficient indicator of health for other group members to draw strength and reassurance from it. Bion's identification of the pair-bond with the promise of biological reproduction is by present standards something of a hetero-sexualist projection. That being said, the Living Theatre produced several children from a number of stable pairs within the group.

With the Mime Troupe it is more difficult to state whether or not there was a strong and influential pair-bond. Davis is rather coy about his relationship with Sandy Archer in his monograph on the Mime Troupe, noting that it spanned several years of Mime Troupe history, but that it was never really fully acknowledged at the time. After Davis and Archer left the Mime Troupe other strong pair-bonds emerged, providing *de facto*, if not officially recognised, stable leadership across the following three decades.

In the case of the Performance Group, Richard Schechner and Joan McIntosh provided a strong pair-bond, and again, as with the Living Theatre, this coincided with their senior positions, Schechner as director, and McIntosh as most highly-developed performer. There were other pair-bonds in the group during its *Dionysus in 69* incarnation. Such pair-bonds, and the extra privileges, if any, enjoyed by those in them, no doubt created resentments and tensions, but they also helped to ground the three groups.

#### Fight/flight responses to external conditions

The perception of impinging external influences, both positive and negative, on the basic assumption group provides opportunities for the group members to deflect internal anxieties about each other and the leader(s) of the group. For the Living Theatre, the forces of the State or the Establishment were seen as the real foes, in keeping with anarchist philosophy. Of the three groups, all of which had members arrested for obscenity and/or possession of drugs, only the Living Theatre had members who were actually jailed for any length of time. Several group members experienced arrest and detention for acts of civil disobedience outside the strict confines of performance. Some were beaten by the police. The use of drugs, and the ever-present risk of 'search and seizure', reinforced an outsider perception within the group. All of this was more or less stoically endured for the sake of pacifism and individual liberty. While there have been many criticisms over the years about the hybrid politics of the Living Theatre, the group seemed to have an unshakable sense of fighting for a common good during the 1950s and 1960s, and conversely, it never seemed to tear itself apart as other groups did. When it dissolved in 1970, this was by agreement. Ugly infighting was avoided, and it was able to regroup relatively quickly with many of the same people involved. Having a sense of external threat seems to have given the Living Theatre a sense of security not always enjoyed by other groups.

The Mime Troupe too seems to have had a strong sense of an outside foe. Initially, it was the Parks Commission. Later it was the Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART) or other departments of local governance, and, more seriously, the United States Government. Most of its criticism was couched in the form of satire, which no doubt made it difficult for the authorities actually to 'bust heads'. The use of humour to deal with a perceived enemy also had the beneficial effect of reducing tension all round. Even when the group was involved in serious internal disputes there would have been some relief through a collective belief in the importance of humour.

The Performance Group does not appear to have had a strong sense of an external foe, except insofar as 'Amerika' was a destructive force on the world stage. Instead, the group looked more for the enemy within. Thus, when the Performance Group explored the theme of fascism, as it claimed to be doing in *Dionysus in 69*, *Makbeth*, and *Commune*, it was always in terms of the tendency towards fascism in any group situation.

Indeed, the group was in some respects the enemy, even though it was also the means to *communitas*. Other than that, Performance Group members would have had to look to their liminoid kin, or fellow 'liminaries', as Turner would have put it, in the immediate environment of New York in order to gain a sense of unity and resistance to the oppressive structure of society.

It seems fair to say that all three groups showed signs of an overall anti-American sentiment in their works during the 1960s. After its departure from America in 1964 the Living Theatre did not use the American cultural and political context in its work except to point to the damage done by white America to Native American culture (*Paradise Now*) and to allude to American involvement in Vietnam (*Antigone*). The American tour of 1968-69 was treated as a kind of insurgent campaign, rather than as an opportunity for the Living Theatre to re-acquaint itself with American culture in an open way. Judith Malina and Jenny Hecht, for example, had preconceived views of America prior to their return that suggested they were in mortal danger in deciding to enter the country (Tytell, 1995: 237).

The Mime Troupe was equally hostile to American involvement in Vietnam (*L'Amant Militaire*; *Eagle Fuck*) and Davis denounced American society as corrupt in his second Guerrilla Theatre essay. Nevertheless, with the *Minstrel Show*, at least, much research was done on the 'blackface minstrel' tradition in America. Later works confronted details of the American criminal justice system (*Los Siete*; *Seize the Time*). The Mime Troupe viewed much of American history and mainstream culture with disdain, but, in keeping a New Left stance, it felt obligated to engage with some of the fine detail of the American social and political system.

The Performance Group regarded all three plays of the late 1960s and early 1970s as allegories of American society, implying that there was something dangerous at its heart. However, unlike theatre groups such as the Open Theatre, which, in *The Serpent* (1968), took easily identifiable iconic moments in American political history, such as the Kennedy assassination, as source material, the Performance Group had as a constant theme the inevitable fascism of the group - the group tears the individual limb from limb (*Dionysus in 69*; *Makbeth*). The group is, ultimately, the Manson Family, or Lt. Calley's unit (*Commune*). Nevertheless, *Commune* was exceptional in at least one regard. Its performers traversed American history (they did not rehearse it uncritically as a patriotic pageant) at a time when much of that history, if it was considered at all, was regarded as fatally contaminated by ideology. The Performance Group went against what a number of commentators have pointed to as a distinctly American tradition of anti-traditionalism or amnesia in American culture (Blau, 1995; Fitzgerald, 1986; Kanter, 1972; Whalen and Flacks, 1991).

In the case of the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, an ability to objectify America, not just in vague terms, but as Mammon or a corrupt imperialist power, was useful insofar as it unified each of

the groups, and gave members a sense of fighting a just cause together, and sharpened the perception of an external foe beyond 'the System' or 'world capitalism'.

While there was a clear sense of each group being met to fight an external threat it is more difficult to determine the external structures to which they were drawn. The Living Theatre, in keeping with one of the tenets of anarchism, did not align itself with any political organisation. Beck and Malina lent their weight to various humanitarian and peace campaigns. Members of the Living Theatre were involved in the occupation of L'Odéon in Paris in May 1968, joining the ranks of young communist and socialist students. Fundamentally, however, the Living Theatre adhered to an unstructured anarchism that refused to dictate any organisational principles. Indeed, it was easier to understand what the Living Theatre was against than what it was for, or, alternatively, one could simply look to the Living Theatre as its own community to see its politics. The Living Theatre was a *grupo de afinidad*, more or less as outlined by American anarchist Murray Bookchin, but without any clear connections to other recognised affinity groups. (The Living Theatre has worked hard to align itself with anarchist communities in Italy in recent years)

The Mime Troupe aligned itself very closely with the New Left, as its accommodation of SDS in its studios attests. Davis saw himself as a Marxist rather than a socialist or a communist. His main point of reference was the guerrilla fighter and figures such as Ché Guevara or Fidel Castro. He talked in terms of 'Cultural Revolution: 1968' in acknowledgement, if not full endorsement, of the political regime in China at the time. Other members of the Mime Troupe, particularly some of those joining after 1968, had more trenchant Maoist views, which led to conflict both before and after Davis's departure. Some of the ideological zealotry that swept through the Mime Troupe in 1969-70 is attributable to the general wave of ultrademocracy that inundated many New Left organisations in the late 1960s, leading catastrophically, many commentators have argued, to the self-destructive and anti-humanist politics of the Weathermen.

The politics of the Performance Group seem to have been more or less a matter of personal choice for group members. Most appear to have shared Schechner's faith in the theatre as embodiment of the *polis* and they did not feature prominently in the mainstream or countercultural press as political activists or spokespeople for particular causes.

#### Fight/flight responses to internal conditions

Apart from the possibilities of becoming pre-occupied with leaders and pair-bonds, other internal foci exist for fight/flight responses in basic assumption groups. Of the three theatres, the Performance Group was the most attracted to confronting intragroup relationships. Most members of the Performance Group chose to enter into formal group therapy during the first year of the group's existence. This focus upon group

existence may also explain the consistently small size of the group, typically fewer than ten, compared to the other two groups, whose numbers almost always ran into double figures.

The Living Theatre also seems to have been attracted to psychology, if not psychotherapy, as evidenced by its adaptation of *Frankenstein*, which is suffused with Freudian and Reichian concepts and references. On an experiential, if not analytical, level, and very much following Artaud's psychology of the theatre, many members of the Living Theatre seem to have used performance on stage as a form of therapy, often directing their aggression at members of the audience. The Living Theatre also exhorted audiences to freak out, or 'signal through the flames', as Artaud demanded. Following the pronouncements about modern society by authors such as R.D. Laing and Herbert Marcuse the Living Theatre saw the social and political role of theatre as that of helping to free the individual from the psychic violence done to him or her by the dehumanising conditions routinely found in such a society.

If therapy could be something of a flight response, so could self-realisation. The Living Theatre, in keeping with its implicit individualist anarchist credo, adhered to the principle that the individual should never be sacrificed to the collective. Self-expression by performers, even to the point of 'flipping out' on stage, as was encouraged in the 'Rite of the Mysterious Voyage' in *Paradise Now*. Whatever an actor felt moved to do was acceptable so long as it was authentically felt. Entry to the group in the mid-1960s was based more upon expression of personal interest than any evaluation of performance capabilities. If you were persistent enough or became romantically involved with an existing member, this was often sufficient to gain entry. Similarly, there do not seem to have been rules for leaving the group. If an individual wished to leave, and then perhaps return at a later date, which many of the veteran members have done, this was quite acceptable.

The San Francisco Mime Troupe was much less tolerant of self-expression and individualistic behaviour. The Mime Troupe existed to serve the people. This is not to say, however, that it could resist entirely the general mood of self-expression in the counterculture in the 1960s. It was, unequivocally, at the ground zero of the hippie explosion - the Haight-Ashbury district in the Summer of Love. It was the Mime Troupe's neighbourhood and Mime Troupe members were part of the pageantry. In the wake of this explosion Davis complained of being blighted by a 'lumpen middle-class' seeking self-expression in and around the group. Furthermore, although the Diggers were for the most part community-focussed, they also, as Digger founder Peter Berg noted, contained a strong individualist, anti-authoritarian, anarchist element, which destabilised both the Mime Troupe and the Diggers themselves.

The Performance Group respected the individual's right to self-expression in stage work as long as it spoke to something within the fabric of the work at hand, or insofar as it helped the actor 'surpass' him or herself in the way a practitioner like Grotowski intended. There was also a strong sense that the group was a

therapeutic site for the individual, albeit often under the guise of group therapy. It was important that the actor as person be fully present in performance. Beyond that, the general atmosphere in the Performance Group seems, very much in keeping with Bion's basic-assumption group, or Turner's liminoid star group, to have been fearful one in terms of perceptions of what the group was likely to do to any one individual. Schechner clearly led the group in the direction of conceiving groups as cannibalising entities. No one in the group seems to have seriously challenged this conception during the 1967-70 period.

### Cross-communication

The three groups were aware, to varying degrees, of the work being carried out by the others. Davis saw several Living Theatre productions in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. He also saw at least one play by the Free Southern Theater of New Orleans while Schechner was still associated with that group. Schechner saw the Mime Troupe's *L'Amant Militaire* in 1967 when it played in New York (he took Jerzy Grotowski along). While in New York at this time Davis discussed with Schechner the concept of a radical theatre booking agency. This, as noted in earlier chapters, eventuated as the Radical Theatre Repertory (RTR), in which neither Schechner nor Davis were very much involved once it was established. RTR managed, or mis-managed, by almost all accounts, the Living Theatre's American tour of 1968-69. Schechner facilitated the publication in *TDR* of countless articles on the Living Theatre, including several interviews conducted by him with Julian Beck and Judith Malina. He also published some of Davis's ideas, notably his first 'Guerrilla Theatre' essay in 1966 ('Guerrilla Theatre' [1965]). Patrick McDermott, of the Performance Group, wrote an essay/review about the Living Theatre's Brooklyn Academy performances of *Paradise Now* and other works (McDermott, 1969). Other Performance Group members saw these shows. Davis and Holden, and most, if not all, of the Mime Troupe saw the Living Theatre perform *Paradise Now* at the Straight Theatre in Haight Street in early 1969 (Holden and Davis wrote a diplomatic but sceptical review for *Ramparts*). Whatever their stylistic and philosophical differences, some common ground was perceived. A few years later Beck and Malina had occasion to write to the Mime Troupe, thanking the group for some assistance rendered to them in Draine, Oregon. Whether many Living Theatre members saw works by the Performance Group is hard to gauge. Beck and Malina, at least, were present at a performance of *Dionysus in 69* in New York in 1968. Beck, Malina and Schechner were on a panel together at the Theatre for Ideas 'Theatre or Therapy' forum at Gramercy Square, St. Marks Place in March 1969 (at which other members of the Living Theatre heckled and interjected much to the consternation of organisers and invited speakers). In May 1972, Schechner helped organise a meeting, along with Mark Amitin of the Universal Movement Theatre Repertory (UMTR), of radical theatre representatives at the Performing Garage. Attendees included Beck, Malina, Steven Ben Israel, and other Living Theatre members. The purpose was to discuss the current state of radical theatre and how better to network (Sainer, 1997: 273-77).

## Conclusions

My aim in this thesis has been to shed some new light on three theatre groups as they existed in the 1960s. Theatrical performance theories based principally on, say, Artaud, Brecht and Grotowski, have characteristically been deployed with these groups. These theorists are important, but as I have argued, they give greater guidance on how to realise works on stage than they do about how to live life as a collaborating group. I believe that it has been possible to develop a better understanding of how these groups presented, or dramatised themselves, as groups, through comparing them with a number of social-psychological and socio-cultural models of behaviour, and with each other. The discussion in this thesis has therefore been framed largely in terms of how three American radical theatre groups presented themselves and their conceptions of the group idea(I), and the degree to which they can be matched with particular models.

In my view, the patterns of interaction in Bion's basic assumption group and the triadic *communitas* tensions in Turner's liminoid star group have significant explanatory power if one wants to understand what happened to these groups in the 1960s. This is not to say that all groups invariably reduce to a basic assumption group or that there is necessarily anything deeply troubling about this, in psychological terms, if they in fact routinely do conform to such a model. If one follows, as Bion did, Klein's existential psychology rather than Freud's libidinal drive psychology, the anxiety behaviour in group settings seems more an adaptive response to basic human uncertainty about the vicissitudes of life. How that is manifested relies in part upon the surrounding cultural constructions of how to behave in group settings. The more one is primed to think in individual terms to begin with, the more stress this will place upon preserving the notion of individual agency at any given time. To this extent, as soon as one becomes aware that one is in a group there seems the potential for loss of self. Sometimes this is a welcome thought, sometimes not. Arguably, in the twenty-first century, the overall socio-cultural context in Western societies is different from that of the 1960s. While the nuclear family and its dynamics are by no means dead, we are now more attuned to co-existences of different types of social groupings, and the importance of our multiple memberships within them.

Similarly, the triad of existential, normative and ideological *communitas* that Turner describes is unlikely to be sufficient as a group paradigm. Yet the challenge of balancing a sense of spontaneity with some reliable ground rules, both of which fit an overarching philosophy, seems no less real today than it would have in the 1960s. In the same vein, the adult star group as surrogate for family group that Turner posited in the 1970s seems relevant in the present. The search for comfortable movement between our kin groups and our social groups is perhaps the best compromise at present as a response to the individual/collective dilemma that Marx and others claim exists in modern industrial societies.

Perhaps the main conclusion that can be drawn from seeing these theatre groups through a Bion/Turner frame of reference is simply a cautionary one. Group work is risky and it tends to activate individual anxieties without people necessarily being aware of this activation. As noted in Chapter Two, contemporary group definitions, such as those set out by Jaques (1991), suggest that we have now recognised the dual nature of groups: they are always both social-emotional and task-directed in character, something which Bion maintained all along.

The question of how group leadership was constructed in these three groups has emerged as a much stronger issue in this study than originally anticipated. One could argue that this was plain to see all the time: each group chosen for study had charismatic, guru-like founders, with good access to rhetorical, if not always financial, resources, and they called the shots for some time before any challenges were raised. Comparisons of other theatres may have produced more varied results, one could argue. However, finding purer, democratically founded and sufficiently long-lived versions of radical theatre groups during the actual decade of the 1960s is problematic. As Mark Weinberg has suggested, the concept of fully collectivist theatre is more appropriately applied to the 1970s and after. What happened in the three groups reflects, in my view, a socio-historical process that took place across a range of groups in society in America, under the rubric of ultrademocracy. Although it is perhaps somewhat frustrating that I have drawn a line at the close of the 1960s, I have done so in order to do justice to three separate subjects. My emphasis has been upon examining the unrefined idea(l) of the group in the 1960s, rather than the more refined idea(l) of the collective in subsequent decades.

Furthermore, it is not clear that the issue of individual charismatic leadership has been removed from the radical theatre group agenda up to the present time. The fits and agonies experienced by radical theatre groups such as those studied here have no doubt informed the views of later groups about the virtues and limitations of auteur-leadership, but they have not banished the principle entirely. Indeed, if anything, the pendulum in the arts world at the present time seems to have swung back in the direction of the auteur figure, suggesting that there is something to be learned from understanding how leadership was constructed in groups such as these three radical theatres.

Another theme to emerge is that of deep participant commitment. Despite my initial suspicions that nakedness, whether physical or psychological, was a kind of countercultural veneer in the 1960s, to which young, predominantly white, intellectuals had easy recourse, this research suggests a high degree of earnestness about the importance of transparency of motive and action. It was much more than showing off. Scrutiny of the materials that document debates within the groups makes it easier to understand the 'politics of nakedness' as a political act, although, as I have indicated in my introduction, it has been a challenge to connect this to my own politics. The latter, shaped more by the 1970s and 1980s, have been anything but a politics of ecstasy. Instead, they reflect a punk-rock politics of scepticism that sits between the



counterculture of the 1960s and the moods of generation X (as in exclusion and disenfranchisement) and generation E (chemical escape) in the 1990s. The Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group embodied the ultrademocratic turmoil of the late 1960s. They were caught up in it, resisted it, capitulated to it, and influenced it. And although all three groups survived this turmoil and settled down to become relatively long-lived institutions, the costs in personal terms were considerable.

At the same time, it is clear that there was a great deal more of a humourous spirit in the activities of the three theatre groups than the existing records and images often suggest. Thus, despite the spectres of Vietnam and internal civil unrest and injustice, one has to acknowledge the considerable amount of positive creative energy that powered these groups; a sense of genuine adventure that cannot be written off as hippie naiveté.

Recalling the research questions outlined in Chapter One it is important to ask, Was the ideal of the group as performed by the three groups in keeping with the popular countercultural conception of the group at the time? In the case of the Living Theatre, and to a lesser extent the Performance Group, one can say that these groups met popular expectations very effectively on at least one level. Both groups performed a 'do your own thing' and 'anything goes' version of the group in key productions. The use of group nakedness mirrored a widespread, Rousseau-influenced humanist romanticism about the purity of primitive, pre-industrial society.

The Living Theatre also articulated the more Artaudian, almost psychotic, sense of rage against the cruelty of civilisation - here the military industrial complex in America. The group embodied, but did not resolve, one of the main contradictions of the period, both the positive tribal spirit of the 1960s, and a sense of impotent rage at a monolithic state machine. The Living Theatre strove to be a theatre group that could confront and interact with the 'real' type of theatre that was taking place in the streets, although the theatre of the streets was often much more violent than the Living Theatre seemed to be willing to accept.

Similarly, the San Francisco Mime Troupe was patently a street-smart entity, one very familiar with its home territory. The Mime Troupe would have appealed to many as the ideal political resistance group: bold, disciplined, adaptable and not averse to having fun. The Performance Group probably appealed most to those with a sense of openness towards the exploration of theatre as a new mental as well as spatial environment. To this extent the Performance Group was suited to a more intellectual ideal concerning the possibilities of groups, even if such possibilities were problematised by impulses towards self-expression and games of ascendancy and power, as shown in *Dionysus in 69* and *Makbeth*.

In terms of precipitating new projects in communal living it is likely that the Living Theatre had the greatest influence. The sheer scale of its touring in Europe and the widely publicised split into four

communal cells in 1970 meant that its own social organisation was broadly disseminated. The San Francisco Mime Troupe was probably more indirectly involved in influencing communal projects. Core defectors from the Mime Troupe, as noted in Chapter Five, were in the vanguard of the Digger movement, which clearly did initiate several communal living experiments, both on the West and East coasts.

At a less ambitious level, and considered in relation to the present day, some of the non-verbal trust-building experiments of theatre and dance groups of the 1960s have survived more or less intact to become routine introductory exercises for 'team-building' as it is now called. The Living Theatre's 'flying' exercise from *Paradise Now* will be familiar to many at-risk teenagers who have been placed in intervention programmes by welfare agencies. Some of us will have done an 'Om' in a circle as a preliminary to the execution of a group task in front of others. Thus, aspects of the ideas and ideals of the group in radical theatre have not so much faded and disappeared, as they have become normalised and more discreet as practices in everyday life. To that extent radical theatres of the 1960s have helped in transforming the collective dramaturgy of everyday life into something less rule-bound and less secretive. We are all much more comfortable in removing our masks, if not our clothes, in order to balance task and social-emotional work in a group. Without the earlier explorations of group life, the sanguine prescriptions of Jaques and others about optimal group functioning would have been less developed.

The impact of works by the Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group on other radical theatres, although difficult to measure empirically, is without question significant. The three theatres thrived in the 1960s and between them produced dozens of productions widely seen and reviewed. The groups varied greatly in terms of political orientation, the lengths of their histories, and their preferred styles of theatre. All three groups, initially at least, embraced the concept of art as a vanguard or avant-garde activity, whether in political revolutionary or aesthetic terms. The Living Theatre was very much a theatre of Artaud. The Mime Troupe never strayed far from Brechtian concepts of performance, regardless of the styles of theatre being deployed. The Performance Group adhered to the fundamental precepts set out by Grotowski. All added their own distinctive qualities to such influences to create exceptional, but often uneven, original works.

Perhaps the strength, rather than the weakness, of these theatres, is that one cannot tell exactly where their influence has been greatest. With the exception of the Performance Group, works were never (seriously) copyrighted or patented in the first place. Their aim was not the manufacture of masterpieces or even final products. This is consistent with a shared philosophy across the three groups: theatre as a process in the community not as a presentation of contrived polished pieces. This view still holds among many theatre groups today. As Weinberg has pointed out, studying present theatre collectives is often made difficult by the low status attached to definitive texts for any given production.

Furthermore, both the Living Theatre and the Performance Group created aggregate groupings of performers and audience in their key works, embodying a sense of a larger *communitas*. This was reinforced by the removal of clothing, de-alienating the body as it became part of a larger whole. The Performance Group and the Living Theatre also attempted to create new secular rituals on stage, which, in principle, if not in practice, since the audience did not always understand them, were common property for all those in attendance. As noted earlier, the print and film documentation of these experiments made it possible for other theatre groups to further their own experimentation with group work. Schechner, in particular, seems to have seen the importance of documentation for use by others, and his early performance theory texts, drawing heavily upon the Performance Group experiments and exercises, are still much in use today. Overall, the Performance Group has probably had more influence upon other American radical theatre groups than the other two studied.

At a more general level, it is reasonable to suppose that the three theatre groups have informed current thinking about how to create radical theatre collectively. It is not unusual now to find detailed discussions of the challenges facing radical theatre collectives. Weinberg (1992: 225-47), for example, provides helpful observations on this matter, as does Papin, who concludes her study with the following summary of 'sources of conflict' for theatre collectives:

- process versus product;
- artistic goals versus political goals;
- political view versus cultural view;
- realistic approach versus symbolic approach;
- focusing view versus expanding view;
- individual creativity versus group creation;
- central director versus group consensus;
- structured versus unstructured;
- confronting audience versus encouraging and empowering audience; and
- responsibility to members versus responsibility to audience. (1982: 220-28)

The Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group confronted all of these issues to varying degrees, and one can argue that their sometimes faltering exploits have at the very least helped define these issues more clearly than they would have been clarified otherwise.

Furthermore, close study of these three groups sharpens the focus on some of the sources of conflict. The first of these is the degree to which public and private boundaries should be dissolved for performers and/or audiences. Many radical theatres of the 1960s believed that there should be no theatrical frame at all. Yet, as Goffman has illustrated in many works, masks, costumes, and roles, facilitate our social selves, they do

not efface them, and perhaps we need the security of 'role distance' or the 'alienation-effect' for our own health much of the time.

Secondly, attempts by ordinary individuals to work in groups are likely to trigger anxiety responses at various times, which, if Bion is correct, tend to follow certain patterns. Being able to identify the psychological patterns or tendencies in groups may help to minimise their negative effects. Conversely, too much emphasis on psychology may distort group function, as the Performance Group experience seems to demonstrate. The boundary between acting for others and 'acting out' for one's self can thus become blurred, and maintaining a balance between the two is a significant challenge.

Thirdly, there is the matter of embeddedness in, or attachment to, space and place. A radical theatre may see itself as an alienated, internationalist and revolutionary entity. The Living Theatre clearly regarded itself as such, and 'guerrilla theatre' has a charismatic appeal about it, as Mime Troupe rhetoric of the mid-1960s amply illustrates. Nevertheless, guerrillas also need a physical home, and they need to be connected to a home community. In their own ways the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group demonstrate how this can be successfully carried out. The Mime Troupe's ecological niche was the Bay Area, and it remains so to the present day. The Performance Group's territory was lower Manhattan. Both groups retained a physical foothold in these areas, unlike the Living Theatre, which seems to have paid a high price, in the long-run, for its nomadic mode of living and performing.

Even without these explicit cautions we could reasonably expect that radical theatre groups of today will be more outward-looking and less insular than many of their counterparts in the 1960s. This is largely as a consequence of some accumulated social learning about group work that has taken place in the past few decades right across society. The type of generic definition of a group offered by, say, Jaques (1991) will probably read like common sense to current radical theatre groups. We have many tools for group work at our disposal nowadays, such as the 'nominal group process' or the 'Delphi technique' for making decisions collectively. These embody participatory democracy in a non-threatening way, and seem tame by comparison with some of the more psychologically intrusive group processes that were permitted in the 1960s and which found their way into productions such as the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69*.

There are important differences, however, between some radical theatres of the 1960s and present-day groups. Today, few groups see the group itself as a total community. Expectations are more modest, and groups tend to be more respectful of existing communities. Present-day radical theatres are likely to be 'community-based theatres', like Human Nature (a theatre run by ex-Diggers in a remote part of Northern California), which draws upon fisheries conservation and logging issues in the locality for its material. Other groups, including the present incarnation of the Living Theatre, which has been based seasonally in a small Italian town, work with local groups in urban settings. This is not to say that community-based

theatre is easier to create than radical experimental theatre. As with many community-based initiatives, there is generally a dilemma: Who owns and controls the process? Projects are often precipitated or facilitated by outsiders. Establishing appropriate terms of reference for all participants may prove difficult, particularly, when issues of authorship, professionalism, parochialism and reluctance to interrogate events of the past arise.

While there is little doubt that the group idea(l)s as performed by the three theatre groups have left constructive legacies, some reservations remain about the subject matter and the form of their group-created works. One reservation relates to how adequately the groups addressed some of the key social and political issues of the 1960s. In speaking more or less directly to the Vietnam War as the Living Theatre did in *Antigone* and the Performance Group did in *Macbeth* and *Commune*, for example, one wonders how effective the chosen analogies were for conveying their respective views on America's involvement in this conflict.

Another concern relates to covering too many issues and presentational styles in one work. Many of the works of the three groups were uneasy assemblages of ideas that lacked sufficient editing and discipline. They all have their powerful moments visually, but often the works, such as *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, seem like juxtapositions or accumulations rather than sustained attempts at reconciliation of particular positions. The convoluted architecture of a work such as *Paradise Now*, which is meant to show sequenced movements from the One to the Many as the work progresses, can still be seen as a collection of half-realised concepts, a bombardment rather than an argument.

In terms of addressing the important matter of the tension between the individual and the collective there is a similar sense of unintentional opaqueness or ambiguity in key works of the three theatre groups. The Performance Group often presented its actors on stage as real people with personal beliefs and anxieties, but the actors rarely discussed the tension between the individual and the collective in direct terms. *Commune* might have achieved this, since it spoke directly to the cultural context of its audience. The play, however, seemed to present the notion of the group or the collective as menacing already, rather than asking openly, What is it to be in a group in America today? The Living Theatre's approach in works such as *Paradise Now* was to pose the question at first in both vivid and provocative terms. The hope was that actors and audience could together reconcile some of the individual/collective, or One/Many, tension through joint creative actions that followed the rites and visions of each rung in the play. Much of this potential seems to have become lost in the demands of the stage events themselves. The San Francisco Mime Troupe also seems to have shied away from open enquiry about the individual/collective tension, preferring instead to work symbolically or allegorically, following Commedia dell'Arte or Brechtian traditions, as it did with *Congress of the Whitewashers*. The Mime Troupe deliberately left aside the actual experience of people as psychological entities in favour of showing us our locations, in keeping with Marx

and Brecht, as social beings or parts of a whole. As it happens, the Mime Troupe is still accused of producing two-dimensional rhetorical work rather than presenting challenging examinations of the human condition. Whether the latter is an important issue depends upon one's view of the crucial functions of theatre in society.

There were also elements of countercultural faddishness in some of the group works. The notion that to be a group you need to be naked together and give up any notion of privacy was at one time very popular. The Living Theatre and the Performance Group seem to have embraced this notion, although, in the case of the Performance Group, actors only had to be naked when performing at the Performing Garage. The latter were otherwise entitled to their private lives and living spaces. Radical theatre groups of today seem much less inclined to require their members to dispense with their clothes in the name of authentic interactions.

A further ambiguity, and this seems largely reflective of the temper of the times, relates to a politics of the group experience that seems to evolve during the 1960s. At first there was a politics of charismatic leadership and the relatively ready acceptance of this by group members. This gave way, as the 1960s progressed, to the politics of ultrademocracy, and difficulties with the concept of any individual leadership figure. In this sense the groups were all linked to the politics of the New Left, and they all felt the effects of the inherent contradictions of the New Left. There was a skepticism of authority, but also a need to organise and mobilise, and to change authoritarian structures into those of a participatory democracy. Determining the means to achieve this without compromise seems to have caused a great deal of anxiety, echoing Turner's view of the necessary tensions between types of *communitas* in liminoid settings.

Another area of concern relates to the role of American history and its cultural traditions in the works of the three groups. It often appears as if America past and present had nothing to offer the group ideal. The group prototype was that of the pre-industrial tribe in the case of the Living Theatre and the Performance Group. The preoccupation with stripping down to the body reflects this romanticism in both cases. The San Francisco Mime Troupe similarly looked beyond America for its group ideals. In the view of Davis at least, it was meant to work in the manner of Brecht's Berliner Ensemble in creating works for the stage. Acknowledged American theatrical influences were minimal. The Mime Troupe's ordeal in staging Brecht's *Congress of the Whitewashers*, the work that effectively broke the group apart in 1969, and the Performance Group's interrogation of American history in *Commune* seem to mark the end of this rather extreme aversion to American culture.

By way of final conclusion it seems appropriate to ask whether or not the Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group were signal liminoid entities or merely anachronisms of the time. Robert Brustein and Herbert Blau, themselves veteran practitioners of the theatre of the 1960s, have

meditated upon the virtues and limitations of the work created in this period. Brustein was perturbed by what he saw happening to the individual playwright in American radical theatre during the 1960s:

What we are witnessing is the effort of the avant-garde to translate 'participatory democracy' into artistic terms, demanding a new egalitarianism that gives equal rank to everyone except the author. Just as the SDS is reluctant to accept leaders or formulate programs for fear of subordinating itself to another form of authority, so the New Theatre, in its more extreme form, rejects the supreme role of the playwright as authoritarian and tyrannical. (1970: 40)

Blau seems marginally more sanguine about the events that took place, possibly because his remarks were made many years later. Nevertheless, he is dubious about the overall legacy of the radical theatres of the time:

The theatricalization of the sixties – from the Love-Ins and Be-Ins and dramatic confrontations to confessional poetry and imaged politics – was self-revealing, self-confirming, presumably dialogic and participatory, but eventually exclusionary, self-negating or – at the margin of survival, as with current solo performances or Performance Art. [...] It was also at certain crucial moments in the Movement, in the desire, say, for *Paradise Now*, as with the Living Theatre at the living end of its communitarian idealism, which refused an aesthetic in favor of a politics, *politically* inept, but whether in any way avoidable no one really knows. [...] It was not the aesthetic minimalism but the political reductivism of the sixties that one regrets, although I suppose each was in fear of the other, the falsifying afflatus of a mind-blowing consciousness. (1987: 8-9)

Whether one agrees or disagrees with their overall views on theatre, these commentators correctly identify a tension that was present in radical American theatre in the 1960s. Both regard as problematic the radical egalitarian ethos of the 1960s, and the extent to which theatre groups reflected this mood, allowing dogmatism to override rational consideration of individual artistry. This view of 1960s theatre is not uncommon today, as theatre academic Bonnie Marranca has protested:

With regard to collective work, The Wooster Group may find its way into the curriculum because it is still visible and active, but students are taught next to nothing about The Living Theatre, Judson Poets' Theatre, Free Southern Theatre, The Open Theatre, Jerzy Grotowski, The Performance Group, The San Francisco Mime Troupe, The Ridiculous Theatre Company, Mabou Mines, or the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre [...] they have no context in which to understand the development of theater and cultural politics in this country nor the struggle of American artists to make a life in the theater. (1996: 167)

This apparent aversion to discussions of collectivity in the 1960s may reflect something of a cultural backlash against the decade and what it failed to deliver, or perhaps, as suggested by Karl Marx regarding society in general, the alienation of the collective, has become firmly re-established once more. At least one commentator, echoing the sentiments of Richard Schechner and Robert Marx that are quoted at the beginning of this thesis, seems convinced that this is the case:

By the beginning of the 1970s, however, the revolutionary fervour had in large part subsided. The assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, plus the victory of Richard Nixon in 1968, marked the beginning of a period of political and aesthetic reaction that countermined the revolutionary zeal – as did the protest movement's success in ending the Vietnam War. For those who remained committed to progressive causes during the 1970s and 1980s, the attempt at radical political change was in the main overtaken by a more ideological struggle against the 'culture of narcissism.' According to Christopher Lasch, this culture is marked by a wave of 'competitive individualism, which in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a

war against all, the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self' (Lasch, 1978, p. xv). For this acquisitive society, ruled by the demands of style and image and by a fear of moral uncertainties, the drama of the 1960s seemed curiously dated and out of touch – an experimental (that is aberrant, rather than vital) theatre. (Savran, 1991: 64)

Alternatively, it may be that radical theatres of the 1960s, such as the Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe and Performance Group, were, quite deliberately, seeking to be agents of change rather than creators of new traditions. It may be too early, even now, to pass full judgement on their importance to theatre.

Also, despite the jaundiced views of some commentators, there are still many radical theatre groups at work now. The appeal of group creation has not evaporated entirely. My own experience in theatre in the 1980s, however brief and inconsequential, was predicated on the principle that group collaboration was more important than individual virtuosity, and I have not surrendered or renounced this principle subsequently. It seems to me that on balance it is better, where possible, to engage directly with the tension between the individual and the collective and with the inherent contradictions of *communitas*. The Living Theatre, San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group all excelled in the different dimensions of these tensions and perhaps this is the best way to view their legacies, i.e., as parts of a greater whole.

This said, it would be unwise and rather impractical to suggest that radical theatres of today should follow faithfully all the practices of their predecessors. In defining themselves as radical theatre groups today, my view is that most would situate themselves somewhere between the following descriptions. The first is a relatively conservative, but clearly post-1960s, definition:

**group** *n.* **1** a number of persons or things located close together, or considered or classed together. **2** (*attrib.*) concerning or done by a group (*a group photograph; group sex*). **3** a number of people working together or sharing beliefs, e.g. part of a political party. **4** a number of commercial companies under common ownership. **5** an ensemble playing popular music. [...] **group therapy** therapy in which patients with a similar condition are brought together to assist one another psychologically. (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1990: 522).

The second is a more colourful image, from Ed Boreal of the Bodacious Buggerilla Theater, which will no doubt resonate with many of those involved in present-day radical theatre collaborations:

What's happened now is that the group is organized on another level, and it's really taken my original idea and gone like where it should go with it. I think again another thing is that you offer a creative thing – no, let me put it this way – a creative thing with one cat is one thing; a creative thing with 12 people being very creative and coming off of each other is another, man. The one cat, like me a member of a group, can do heavier shit if I've got a group to run my shit on and then come back and write it down or whatever than if I'm out there cuttin' off my ear on top of a hill someplace tryin' to say, you know, whatever you say on top of a hill after you cut off your ear. That collective situation, I've really learned the value of it. I tend to be a loner, and I still maintain that partly; but I do need the collective; I really do need it. And because it's a collective, much more can get done. And the group for one reason or another really mirrors certain things that I think about. And it's just as if – I think every member of the group can feel it – it's just as if each member of the group – say you're talkin' about 10 people, somebody just got 18 more arms. [...] Can you hit some invisible point, bringing it together, man, because making 12 people work as



one is really a heavy tune. I mean, it's a contradiction; you really dig individuality or the creativeness of an individual there as you sit in the circle and make whatever decision you wanna make. But at the same time, once certain decisions have been made and plans of action have been chosen, then it's all got to come together. And it moves like a well-coordinated centipede. (Bereal qtd. in Weisman, 1973: 72)

Bereal's centipede, in my view, stands for Turner's *communitas* in equilibrium, however, transient that equilibrium might turn out to be. Ironically perhaps, Turner seems to put the *raison d'être* of radical theatre as eloquently as any of its theorists, critics and performers when he states:

'Experimental' theatre is nothing less than 'performed,' in other words, 'restored' experience, that moment in the experiential process – that often prolonged and internally segmented 'moment' – in which meaning emerges through 'reliving' the original experience (often a social drama subjectively perceived), and is given an appropriate aesthetic form. This form becomes a piece of communicable wisdom, assisting others (through *Verstehen*, understanding) to understand better not only themselves but also the times and cultural conditions which compose their general 'experience' of reality. (1982: 18)

Having studied the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe and the Performance Group this seems an appropriate description of any or all of these three groups. In their own ways they have provided us with communicable wisdom about our times and cultural conditions.

**Appendix A: Membership of the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Performance Group prior to 1970**

Living Theatre 1951-70

The membership of the Living Theatre spans several decades and many productions. Durham’s *American Theatre Companies 1931-1986* (1989), which generally gives comprehensive lists of membership for the theatre companies profiled, does not attempt to list members of the Living Theatre prior to 1968, although it is profiled in detail. The cast list for *Paradise Now* is included in Durham, a listing that has been used in other publications as the company membership (Biner, 1971; Malina and Beck, 1971). A comprehensive listing of membership before 1968 is difficult to find. I have used Judith Malina’s *The Diaries of Judith Malina 1947-1957* (1984), Gelber’s *The Connection* (1960) and Tytell’s *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile and Outrage* (1995) to compile an approximate list of pre-1968 membership. I have also used the acknowledgement list in the manuscript version of the script for *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* (1964) held in the Billy Rose Collection of the New York Public Library (LT MSS 1988 005 Box 33 Folder 10).

An \* indicates that the actor was in several productions. Brackets indicate approximate period of association with the group by longer serving members.

Membership of the Living Theatre during the period c.1951-62			<i>The Connection</i> c.1959-60
Lee Alexander John Ashbery Dick Astor Julian Beck (1946-85) Lilli Bennett Sudie Bond Julie Bovasso Joe Chaikin (1959-62) Remy Charlip* Frances Clarke Jed Duane Tobi Edelman Larry Elfenbein Shirley Gleaner (later Nina Gitana della Primavera)* Garry Goodrow (1959- 65) Judith Graves Leonard Hicks*	Serafina Hovhaness Irma Hurley Victor Johnson Ruth Kaner Bill Keck Bill Kehoe Ace King Joe Leberman Judy Lennett Charles Lewis Frank McGuire Jackson MacLow Judith Malina (1946- 2002+) Judith Martin Donald Mayre George Miller * Mary Montague Moe Moscovitz Ellie Munro Walter Mullen	Bill Mullahy Frank O’Hara Sean O’Neill Dorothy Olim (Geraldine Page) Henry Proach (1953-63) Sylvia Short Jim Smith Philip Smith * Norman Solomon Kathe Snyder Harriet Stock Richard Stryker Eric Weinberger Jerry Wellish	James Anderson (1960- 1970s) Leonard Hicks Ira Lewis Warren Finnerty (1959- 64) Leroy (Rain) House Carl Lee Jerome Raphael John McCurry Garry Goodrow [Freddie Redd] [Michael Mattos] [Louis McKenzie] [Jamil Zakkai] [Jackie McLean] [Larry Ritchie] Henry Proach [Barbara Winchester] (Martin Sheen] square brackets around names indicate a more- or-less one-off association

<b>New York c.1962-63</b>	<b><i>The Brig</i> c.1963-64</b>	<b>Europe c.1964-67</b>
James Anderson Jenny Hecht (c.1962-70) Steven Ben Israel (1963-70s) William Shari (c.1962-70s)	James Anderson Chic Ciccarelli Mel Clay (c.1963-70s) Rufus Collins (1963-70s) Carl Einhorn (1963-70s) Warren Finnerty Henry Howard (1963-70s) Steven Ben Israel Tom Lillard Gary Goodrow Henry Proach Jim Tiroff (1963-70s) Luke Theodore (c.1963-70s) Steve Thompson (c.1963-1970s) Gene Lipton	Pamela Badyk (1964-70s) Echnaton (c.1965-70s) Gene Gordon (c. 1964-70) Roy Harris (c.1965-70s) Peter Hartman (c.1965-67) Nona Howard (1964-70s) Birgit Knabe (c.1965-70s) Mary Krapf (Mary Mary) (1964-70s) Michele Mareck (c.1964-70) Dorothy Shari (c.1964-70s) Petra Vogt (1966-70)

<b><i>Mysteries and Smaller Pieces 1964</i></b>	
James Anderson Julian Beck Carl Einhorn Reggie Gay Gene Gordon John Harriman Jenny Hecht Leroy House Henry Howard Nona Howard Steven Ben Israel	Tom Lillard Roberta Longhi Judith Malina Michele Mareck Paul Premsky William Shari Steve Thompson Jim Tiroff Luke Theodore Lee Worley

<b><i>Paradise Now</i> c.1968-70</b>		
James Anderson Pamela Badyk Cal Barber Margery Barber Julian Beck Rod Beere Carol Berger Odile Bingisser Mel Clay Rufus Collins Pierre Dèvis* Echnaton Carl Einhorn	Gene Gordon Roy Harris Jenny Hecht Frank Hooeboom Henry Howard Nona Howard Steven Ben Israel Birgit Knabe Mary Krapf (Mary Mary) Sandy Linden Gianfranco Mantegna Judith Malina Michele Mareck	Günter Pannewitz Dorothy Shari William Shari Luke Theodore Steve Thompson Jim Tiroff Leo Treviglio Diana Van Tosh Petra Vogt Karen Weiss Peter Weiss Souzka Zeller

### San Francisco Mime Troupe 1959-70

The following membership lists of performers have been compiled from the chronology contained in Davis (1975: 195-214), and Mime Troupe-related archives. Davis himself lists some 320 contributors to the Mime Troupe over its first ten years (126-27), but the list does not denote the type of contribution or years of service. I have compiled an approximate list of veteran members, although many others have returned from time to time to participate in particular works or events. The table indicates the other core contributors over the period 1959-70. The number of performers in any given major production typically ranged from seven to ten, with four to five people in technical support. These numbers were often reduced for touring purposes. Furthermore, many members contributed to peripheral activities or units of the Mime Troupe, such as the Gorilla Marching Band, and the Gutter Puppets. These sometimes accompanied a *commedia* park performance or a street event organised by other community or Movement organisations. On some occasions several units were in operation at the same time. By 1967 the overall membership was approximately sixty members. Davis reduced the number to fourteen in April of that year.

#### Veteran members:

Sandra Archer (1964-70) performer/director  
 Joe Bellan (1963-66) performer  
 Dan Chumley (1968-2001) director  
 R.G. Davis (1959-70) performer/director  
 Judy Goldhaft (Rosenberg) (Digger) (1963-66) performer

Arthur Holden (1963-2001) performer/director  
 Joan Holden (1967-2001) playwright/director  
 Jerry Jump (1963-66) performer  
 Sharon Lockwood (1969-95) performer  
 Joe Lomuto (1963-70) performer

Performers			Technical
Michael Alaimo	Kay Howard	John Robb	<u>Sets:</u>
Steve Bailey	Robert Hurwitt	Earl Robertson	John Barrow
Peter Berg (Digger)	Melody James	Erica Rosqui	Richard Beggs
Lorne Berkun	Bollette Jacobson	Ronald Reese	John Connell
Eric Berne	Buck Lacey	John Schonenberg	William Geis
Anne Bernstein	Robert LaMorticello	Shirley Shaw	Wally Hedrick
Lee Bouterse	Bob Lanchester	Ruth Sicular	Fred Reichman
Jeanne Brechan	Jane Lapiner (Digger)	Marvin Silber	Karl Rosenberg
Ruth Breuer	Michael Lawrence	Marlene Silvers	Megan Snider
John Broderick	Norma Leistiko	Dave Simpson (Digger)	Coni Spiegel
Manny Brookman	Bill Lindyn	Robert Slattery	William Wiley
Lynn Brown	Marc Ling	Malachi Spicer	<u>Costumes and masks:</u>
Mia Carlisle	Dave Love	Kai Spiegel	Dan Chumley
Peter Cohon (Digger)	Tom Luce	Caraline Straley	Judy Collins
John Condrin	Daniel McDermott	Marilyn Sydney	Nancy Dickler
Ron Crawford	George Matthews	Mark Truman	Ann Horton
Susan Darby	Jason Marc-Alexander	Fred Unger	Judy Davis
Charlie Degelman	Julio Martinez	Luis Valdez	Francesca Greene
Billy Dixon	Barbara Melandry	Jael Weisman	Larry Keck
Robert Doyle	Norma Middlebrook	Donald Weygandt	Davis Maclay
Serge Echieverria	Jeanne Milligan	Jo Ann Wheatley	Sara Morris
Nick Eldridge	Kent Minault (Digger)	Norma Whittaker	Bruce Newell
Ellen Ernest	Jamie Miller	Ann Willock	Susan Roth
Sam Erwin	Borris Morris	Ken Wydro	Marina Sender
Steve Friedman	Yvette Nachmias		Kathryn Stuntz
William Freese	Keith Nason		Caralie Tarble
Dawn Grey	Terry O'Keefe		Ann Willock
Emmett Grogan (Digger)	Gayle Pearl Ron		Joan Wright
Roger Guy-Bray	Poindexter		<u>Music:</u>
Merle Harding	Tom Purvis		Jeanne Brechan
Willie B. Hart	Judi Quick		David Jenkins

Performers			Technical
Fred Hayden	Gary Rappy		Leonard Kline
Jim Haynie	Chuck Ray		Pauline Oliveros
Kay Hayward	William Raymond		Gayle Pearl
Daryl Henriques	Chuck Richardson		Steve Reich
Victoria Hochberg	Val Riseley		William Spencer

### The Performance Group 1967-72

Many of the published works by Richard Schechner list, or make mention of, Performance Group personnel during the late 1960s. The size of the group, unlike the Living Theatre and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, always remained less than fifteen in total. I have used Schechner's *Environmental Theater* (1973), Shephard's *The Dionysus Group* (1991), Sainer's *The Radical Theatre Notebook* (1997), and Performance Group-related archives to construct the tables below. The group effectively broke up after *Makbeth* and then reformed. This accounts for the major change in membership composition.

<i>Dionysus in 69</i> (November 1967- July 1969)	<i>Makbeth</i> (July 1969-January 1970)	<i>Commune</i> (March 1970 – c. January 1971)
Remi Barclay Sam Blazer* Jason Bosseau Richard Dia William Finley Patrick McDermott Joan MacIntosh Margaret Ryan Richard Schechner William Shephard Priscilla 'Ciel' Smith  <u>Stage manager:</u> Vicky May (Strang)^  * 'voted out' May 1969 ^ left June 1969  (Rozanne Levine – recruited off the street by male members – left after first run)  Temporary or associate members  (Ron Schenk) (Gwendolyn Galsworth) (Charles 'Chuck' Strang – partner of Vicki May)  <u>Set design:</u> Jerry Rojo	Remi Barclay Jason Bosseau Steven Borst^ Richard Dia William Finley Spalding Gray* Patrick McDermott Joan MacIntosh Margaret Ryan Richard Schechner William Shephard# Priscilla 'Ciel' Smith  ^ recruited late into <i>Makbeth</i> rehearsals * recruited late into <i>Makbeth</i> run # left after run had started  <u>Set design:</u> Jerry Rojo	Stephen Borst Patricia Bower Mik Cribben Jayme Daniel Patric Epstein Spalding Gray James Griffiths Elizabeth LeCompte Joan McIntosh Richard Schechner Bruce White <u>Set design:</u> Jerry Rojo  <i>Commune (1971-April 1972)</i> Stephen Borst Spalding Gray James Griffiths Converse Gurian Maxine Herman Elizabeth LeCompte Joan McIntosh Richard Schechner Timothy Shelton  <i>The Tooth of Crime (May 1972 -)</i> Stephen Borst Spalding Gray James Griffiths Elizabeth LeCompte Joan McIntosh Richard Schechner Timothy Shelton James Clayburgh - associate member

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- San Francisco Mime Troupe. San Francisco Mime Troupe Archives. Special Collections, Shields Library, University of California at Davis. Accession #: D-61 50 linear feet.
- Schechner, Richard. Papers. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Harvey S. Firestone Memorial Library, Princeton University, New Jersey.

## Appendix B: Political, theatrical, and countercultural events of the 1950s and 1960s

This chronology is compiled from several sources. There are many variations in publication dates for works of literature within them. I have used the most commonly agreed dates rather than strict publication dates in order to reflect the points at which these works entered the 'mainstream' of the counterculture. Whilst the differentiation into categories, such as those created below, and the inclusion *per se* of material in any chronology, involves subjective choices, a few general points can be made with reasonable confidence. The first is that the years 1968 and 1969 in America stand out as both highly productive, and highly volatile. Secondly, there is a pattern of 'non-literary' influence as the decade progresses, most clearly illustrated by the profusion of musical output. Thirdly, the focus of countercultural and avant-garde activity shifts from New York to San Francisco, London, and other centres from 1965 onwards, perhaps temporarily from a longer-term perspective, but certainly until the end of the decade. Fourthly, when considering where American youth was geographically situated in the late 1960s, it is worth noting that in 1969 there were some half-million Americans in Vietnam, most of them young, and according to some estimates, an equivalent number lived in urban and rural communes (Jerome, 1974). With respect to the three radical theatre groups, I have deliberately 'sandwiched' their streamlined chronologies between the political and cultural columns (NB. There are separate detailed chronologies for each of the three radical theatre groups). While this is to some extent a rhetorical device, I believe that, to varying degrees, the three theatres straddled the political and cultural divide. The degree to which this is an artificial divide in the first place is addressed in my discussion of the counterculture in Chapter Three, but in essence, the counterculture can be said to be a combination of politics and culture, not a subcultural 'escape response' phenomenon, although some aspects of it were escapist in nature.

Year	U.S./World Politics	The New Left/Civil Rights/Civil Unrest/ 'Movement'	The Living Theatre/San Francisco Mime Troupe/Performance Group	Avant-garde performance/radical theatres/other arts influences	The counterculture
1950	Britain recognises government of Communist China (January); Alger Hiss, State Department official, jailed for espionage (January); Senator Joseph McCarthy launches anti-Communist campaign (February); North Korean troops invade South Korea (June); President Truman sends military advisors to Vietnam (June); U.S. troops in first battle in Korea (July); French re-occupation of Vietnam (1945) continues being vigorously fought by Viet Minh;	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) [founded 1910-11] and Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) [founded 1942-43] maintain their activities of promoting legal reform and non-violent direct action to combat racial discrimination and segregation throughout the 1950s	<u>Living Theatre</u> : Judith Malina and Julian Beck seek to establish a permanent theatre company (initial efforts made as early as 1947)	John Cage and Merce Cunningham introduce elements of chance in their music and dance compositions, and in their teaching (initiated in 1948) at Black Mountain College, North Carolina; Jackson Pollock's first 'action painting'	Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen and Lew Welch room together at Reed College, Oregon. Lawrence Ferlinghetti moves from Paris to San Francisco. Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso meet for the first time (in Greenwich Village).  Koinonia Farm, a biracial Christian commune, located near Americus, Georgia, and founded in 1942 by Clarence Jordan.  Tivoli Farm, upstate NY, a Catholic Workers' communal living initiative, with a base at 36 East 1st Street, NYC. Closely associated with Dorothy Day, a friend of the Living Theatre's Beck and Malina during the 1940s and 1950s.  <u>Literature</u> : Jack Kerouac <i>The Town and the City</i> ; David Riesman <i>The Lonely Crowd</i> ;
1951	Julius and Ethel Rosenberg tried convicted for espionage;		<u>Living Theatre</u> : Debuts with <i>Childish Jokes</i> (Paul Goodman); <i>Ladies Voices</i> (Gertrude Stein); <i>He Who Says Yes and He Who Says No</i> (Bertolt Brecht); <i>The Dialogue of the Manikin and the Young Man</i> (F. Garcia Lorca); <i>Beyond the Mountains</i> (Kenneth Rexroth); <i>Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights</i> (G. Stein)  <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> :	<u>Other theatres</u> :  <u>Dance</u> : <i>Sixteen Dances for Soloist and Company of Three</i> (Merce Cunningham)	<u>Literature</u> : J.D. Salinger <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> ; C. Wright Mills <i>White Collar</i> ; Rachel Carson <i>The Sea Around Us</i> ;

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1952	First atmospheric nuclear bomb test, Yucca Flat, Nevada (April); First contraceptive pill produced (....);	CORE holds first sit-in in U.S. history (May);	<u>Living Theatre</u> : <i>Desire Trapped by the Tail</i> (Pablo Picasso); <i>Ladies' Voices</i> ; <i>Sweeney Agonistes</i> (T.S. Eliot); <i>Faustina</i> (Paul Goodman); <i>Ubu the King</i> (Alfred Jarry); <i>The Heroes</i> (John Ashbery) <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : R.G. Davis at Ohio University studying for undergraduate degree	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : 4'33" (John Cage); <i>Untitled Event</i> (John Cage/David Tudor/ Mary Caroline Richards/ Robert Rauschenberg/ Charles Olsen/ Merce Cunningham et al.) at Black Mountain College <u>Off-Broadway</u> : Circle in the Square Theatre presents <i>Summer and Smoke</i> (Tennessee Williams) and marks beginning of off-Broadway <u>Other theatres</u> : Actor's Workshop of San Francisco founded; <u>Dance</u> :	Lawrence Ferlinghetti opens City Lights Bookshop in San Francisco; Gary Snyder moves to San Francisco;  <u>Literature</u> : John Clellon Holmes <i>Go</i> ; John Clellon Holmes 'This is the Beat Generation' article published in <i>The New York Times Magazine</i> ;
1953	Julius and Ethel Rosenberg executed (June); Armistice signed in Panmunjom takes effect in Korea – American deaths totalled nearly 25,000 (July); President Mossadeh of Iran overthrown amid allegations of CIA involvement (....);	Bus boycott by blacks in Baton Rouge (summer);	<u>Living Theatre</u> : No public performances <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : (see above)	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : Samuel Beckett <i>Waiting for Godot</i> - debut, Paris <u>Off-Broadway</u> : Phoenix Theatre and Joseph Papp's 'New York Shakespeare Festival' founded <u>Other theatres</u> : <i>The Crucible</i> (A Miller); <u>Dance</u> :	Allen Ginsberg makes first visit to San Francisco from New York;  <u>Literature</u> : William Burroughs <i>Junkie</i> and <i>Queer</i> ;  <u>Film</u> :
1954	Decisive defeat of French troops in Vietnam at Dien Bien Phu (May); Geneva agreement divides Vietnam (July); U.S. testing of hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll (....); President Arbenz of Guatemala overthrown amid allegations of CIA involvement (....);	White students march against integration in Washington and Baltimore (October);	<u>Living Theatre</u> : <i>The Age of Anxiety</i> (W.H. Auden); <i>The Spook Sonata</i> (August Strindberg); <i>Orpheus</i> (Jean Cocteau); <i>The Idiot King</i> (Charles Fredericks) <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : R.G. Davis studying at University of New Mexico, Albuquerque	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : <u>Off-Broadway</u> : Theatre de Lys founded; <u>Other theatres</u> : <u>Dance</u> :	Jack Kerouac begins serious study of Buddhism; Michael McClure moves to San Francisco, meets Robert Duncan; Robert Creeley moves to Black Mountain College;  <u>Literature</u> : Aldous Huxley <i>The Doors of Perception</i> ; first issue of <i>Black Mountain Review</i> ;  <u>Film</u> : Stanley Kramer <i>The Wild One</i> , featuring Marlon Brando; Federico Fellini <i>La Strada</i> ; Akira Kurosawa <i>The Seven Samurai</i> ;  <u>Music</u> : Bill Haley and the Comets <i>Rock Around the Clock</i> ; Elvis Presley <i>That's All Right</i> (The vast number of 'rock and roll' groups, which appeared from the mid-50s until the early 60s, when the 'beat groups,' and then the 'rock groups' took over, have been omitted here. They are, nevertheless, an important influence in the ascendancy of the 'group ethos' in the 60s.)
1955	Recently elected U.S. President Eisenhower endorses \$216m military and economic aid to	Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on segregated bus, precipitating boycotts of segregated	<u>Living Theatre</u> : <i>Tonight We Improvise</i> (Luigi Pirandello); <i>Phèdre</i> (Jean Racine); <i>The Young Disciple</i> (Paul Goodman)	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : <u>Off-Broadway</u> : Irish Players founded;	Six Gallery poetry reading (Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Michael McClure, Philip Lamantia, Kenneth



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	South Vietnam (January); Ngo Dinh Diem declares South Vietnam a republic (October);	buses by NAACP in Montgomery, Alabama, led by Martin Luther King Jr. (December);	<u>San Francisco Mime Troupe:</u> (see above)	<u>Other theatres:</u> <u>Dance:</u> Ann Halprin forms the Dancers' Workshop Company of San Francisco	Rexroth, Philip Whalen) in San Francisco (October); Robert Duncan teaches at Black Mountain College; <u>Literature:</u> Lawrence Ferlinghetti <i>Pictures of the Gone World</i> ; Gregory Corso <i>The Vestal Lady on Brattle and Other Poems</i> ; Village Voice founded; Herbert Marcuse <i>Eros and Civilization</i> ; <u>Film:</u> Richard Brooks <i>The Blackboard Jungle</i> ; Elia Kazan <i>East of Eden</i> – debut of James Dean; Nicholas Ray <i>Rebel Without A Cause</i> ; James Dean killed in car accident
1956	Sudan gains independence; U.S. military advisory group replaces French training of the South Vietnamese Army (April); Soviet occupation of Hungary (....); First Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) march at Aldermaston (....);		<u>Living Theatre:</u> no public performances <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe:</u> <u>Performance Group:</u> Richard Schechner graduates from Cornell (BA English with honours)	<u>Avant-garde/experimental:</u> John Cage initiates experimental music composition course, New School for Social Research, New York – pupils include Allan Kaprow, Jackson MacLow, George Brecht, Al Hansen and Dick Higgins; <u>Off-Broadway:</u> <u>Other theatres:</u> Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. created; <u>Dance:</u>	Black Mountain College closes; Gary Snyder studies Zen in Japan; <u>Literature:</u> Allen Ginsberg <i>Howl and Other Poems</i> ( <i>Howl</i> contains references to Peyote, a hallucinogenic cactus found in Mexico); C. Wright Mills <i>The Power Elite</i> ; William Whyte <i>The Organization Man</i> ;
1957	Ghana gains independence (March); Joe McCarthy dies (May); USSR launches Sputnik (October); Atomic bomb air raid drills (periodically); Peak of the baby boom in U.S. – 4.3 million births;	Black churches bombed in Montgomery Alabama (January); Martin Luther King Jr. and other church leaders found Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (January); Federal troops ordered in to enforce school integration, Little Rock, Arkansas (September);	<u>Living Theatre:</u> no public performances <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe:</u> R.G. Davis on Fulbright scholarship to Paris to study mime with Etienne Decroux <u>Performance Group:</u> Richard Schechner teaching at Johns Hopkins University on fellowship	<u>Off-Broadway:</u> <u>Avant-garde/experimental:</u> <u>Other theatres:</u> <u>Dance:</u>	<u>Literature:</u> Jack Kerouac <i>On the Road</i> ; Barney Rosset launches <i>Evergreen Review</i> , second issue devoted to the San Francisco Poetry 'Renaissance'; Gordon Wasson's essay 'Seeking the Magic Mushroom' (the Peyote mushroom which contains psilocybin) published in <i>Life</i> ; Norman Mailer article 'The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster' published in <i>Dissent</i> ; <u>Communes:</u> Reba Place Fellowship, an urban Christian commune founded in Evanston, Chicago, principally by John and Louise Miller;
1958	House Un-American Committee (HUAC) in highly active mode;	Student political organisations formed – e.g., SLATE; National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE); CORE and Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA) activists involved in anti-nuclear protests in Pacific (vessels <i>Golden Rule</i> and <i>Phoenix</i> ); CNVA activists involved in several	<u>Living Theatre:</u> no public performances <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe:</u> R.G. Davis joins Actor's Workshop of San Francisco as assistant director <u>Performance Group:</u> Richard Schechner graduates with an MA in English from the State University of Iowa.	<u>Avant-garde/experimental:</u> Antonin Artaud (tr. Mary Caroline Richards) <i>The Theatre and Its Double</i> appears in the U.S.; <u>Off-off-Broadway:</u> Caffé Cino, opened by Joe Cino at 31 Cornelia Street, signals start of off-off-Broadway; <u>Other theatres:</u> Paper Bag Players founded in NYC by Judith Martin, Remy	Synanon founded; Herb Caen coins the term 'Beatnik' in <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> ; <u>Literature:</u> Jack Kerouac <i>The Dharma Bums, The Subterraneans</i> ; Gregory Corso <i>Gasoline and Bomb</i> ; Diane DiPrima <i>This Kind of Bird Flies Backwards</i> ; Gary Snyder <i>Riprap</i> ; Lawrence Ferlinghetti <i>A Coney Island of</i>

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		protests at missile bases and military facilities in U.S.;		Charlip, Sudie Bond, (all had worked at the Living Theatre – the first three seasons were presented at the Living Theatre's 14th Street venue); Lincoln Center establishes a Repertory Theatre; <u>Dance:</u>	<i>the Mind</i> ; <i>The Realist</i> founded by Paul Krassner; LeRoi Jones and Hetti Cohen publish Yugen;
1959	Batista government in Cuba overthrown by guerrillas, led by Fidel Castro (January);	Student Peace Union formed in Chicago, mostly drawn from Young People's Socialist League (Summer) [dissolved in 1964, mainly as a result of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of August 1963];	<u>Living Theatre</u> : <i>Many Loves</i> (William Carlos Williams); <i>The Cave at Machpelah</i> (Paul Goodman); <i>The Connection</i> (Jack Gelber); <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : founded by R.G. Davis; <u>Performance Group</u> :	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : The Theatre of Thirteen Rows (later the Teatr Laboratorium or Laboratory Theatre) founded by Jerzy Grotowski in Opole (later Wroclaw), Poland <u>Off-off-Broadway</u> : <u>Happenings</u> : 18 <i>Happenings in 6 Parts</i> (Allan Kaprow) at Reuben Gallery <u>Other theatres</u> : <u>Dance</u> :	Allen Ginsberg takes LSD for the first time at the Mental Research Institute, Palo Alto; Timothy Leary, a clinical psychologist, experiments with teonanácatl mushroomse in Cuernavaca, Mexico; <u>Literature</u> : Jack Kerouac <i>Mexico City Blues</i> , <i>Maggie Cassidy</i> , and <i>Doctor Sax</i> ; William Burroughs <i>Naked Lunch</i> (French publisher); Erving Goffman <i>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</i> ; John Neihardt <i>Black Elk Speaks</i> ; Norman O. Brown <i>Life Against Death</i> : <u>Music</u> : Motown Records established in Detroit;
1960	Protests in San Francisco at execution of Caryl Chessman (February); Sharpeville riots, 56 black South Africans killed, state of emergency declared (March); East Germans flee agricultural collectivisation to West Germany (April); 11 African nations gain independence (July-October); East Germany closes its border to West Germany (August); John F. Kennedy elected U.S. president (November); American forces in Vietnam total 900 (December)	Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID) becomes Students for a Democratic Society (January) [NB. There is some disagreement about the official formation of SDS, usually given as 1962]; Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed, Raleigh NC (April); 10 black Americans shot in Mississippi during beach segregation protest (April); student arrests in San Francisco following protest against HUAC meetings at City Hall (May); San Francisco Bay Area Student Committee for the Abolition of HUAC formed (September); Riots against desegregation in New Orleans (December)	<u>Living Theatre</u> : <i>The Marrying Maiden</i> (Jackson MacLow); <i>Women of Trachis</i> (Sophocles/ Ezra Pound); <i>In the Jungle of Cities</i> (Bertolt Brecht); <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : <i>11th Hour Mime Show</i> (self-written); <i>Act Without Words II</i> (Samuel Beckett) <u>Performance Group</u> : Richard Schechner arrives in New Orleans to study for PhD in theatre at Tulane University. Subject: Eugene Ionesco (appointed as assistant professor when?)	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : Eugene Ionesco <i>Rhinoceros</i> ; Harold Pinter <i>The Caretaker</i> ; <u>Off-off-Broadway</u> : Café La Mama established by Ellen Stewart at East 12th Street; Take 3 on Bleeker Street opened, <i>King Ubu</i> (September) – often given as an alternate starting date for off-off-Broadway <u>Happenings</u> : <i>Ray Gun Spex</i> (Claes Oldenburg, Robert Whitman, Allan Kaprow, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Jim Dine, Red Grooms); <i>Anthropometries of the Blue Period</i> (Yves Klein) – first public European (Paris) happening, with female nudes as paint brushes <u>Other theatres</u> : <u>Dance</u> : Members of Dancers' Workshop Company, S.F. arrive in New York (laying foundations for the Judson Dance Group, established in 1962)	Beatnik/Existentialist culture becomes fashionable; Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert begin psilocybin research project (initially at a prison in Concord, Massachusetts) that launches a psychedelic community in the Harvard/Cambridge area, centred around the Leary/Alpert house in Newton; Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky visit Leary and Alpert, subsequently supplying Leary with contact details for artists and writers to be included in the psilocybin 'crusade'; Peter Hall and Peggy Ashcroft form the Royal Shakespeare Company; <u>Literature</u> : Paul Goodman <i>Growing Up Absurd</i> ; R.D. Laing <i>The Divided Self</i> ; William Burroughs <i>The Soft Machine</i> ; Gregory Corso <i>The Happy Birthday of Death</i> ; <u>Film</u> : Federico Fellini <i>La Dolce Vita</i> ; Michelangelo Antonioni <i>La Notte</i> , <i>L'Avventura</i> ; <u>Music</u> : The Beatles formed

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1961	<p>Kennedy-backed Peace Corps initiated (March); CIA-backed abortive invasion of Bay of Pigs, Cuba (April); escalation of U.S. presence in Vietnam; East Germans flee to West Berlin (July); Berlin Wall constructed (August);</p> <p>blockade; violence at ban-the-bomb protest in Trafalgar Square (September); Algerian/ French battles over independence escalate (April-October);</p>	<p>SNCC, CORE, NAACP increase activity in the South (May-September);</p> <p>White racists attack 'freedom riders' in Birmingham, Alabama (April);</p>	<p><u>Living Theatre</u>: First European tour; <i>The Apple</i> (Jack Gelber);</p> <p><u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u>: <i>11th Hour Mime Show</i> (self-written); <i>Act Without Words II</i> (Samuel Beckett); <i>Event I</i> (self-written);</p> <p><u>Performance Group</u>: Richard Schechner in Paris, researching Ph.D.</p>	<p><u>Avant-garde/experimental</u>: <i>Happy Days</i> (Samuel Beckett)</p> <p><u>Off-off-Broadway</u>: Judson Poets' Theatre established at Judson Memorial Church, Washington Square;</p> <p><u>Happenings</u>: <i>Store Days</i> (Claes Oldenburg); George Macunias coins 'Fluxus,' denoting loosely affiliated group of artists, including Dick Higgins, Richard Maxfield, Yoko Ono, La Monte Young, Jackson MacLow, Alison Knowles, Bob Watts, and Al Hansen, who created performance works in various galleries and unusual display sites throughout New York City; <i>Living Sculpture</i> and <i>Base of the World</i> (Piero Manzoni);</p> <p><u>Other theatres</u>:</p> <p><u>Dance</u>: <i>See-Saw</i> (Simone Forti, Robert Morris, Yvonne Rainer)</p>	<p>Contraceptive pill widely available;</p> <p><u>Literature</u>: Jack Kerouac <i>Book of Dreams</i>; Allen Ginsberg <i>Kaddish and Other Poems: 1958-1960</i>; Gregory Corso <i>The American Express</i>; Diane DiPrima <i>Dinners and Nightmares</i>; LeRoi Jones <i>Preface to a Twenty-Volume Suicide Note....</i>; Michael McClure <i>Dark Brown</i>; Joseph Heller <i>Catch-22</i>; Henry Miller <i>Tropic of Cancer</i>; W.R. Bion <i>Experiences in Groups</i>;</p> <p><u>Film</u>: Alan Resnais <i>Last Year at Marienbad</i>; Luis Buñuel <i>Viridiana</i>; Michelangelo Antonioni <i>L'Eclisse</i>;</p> <p><u>Music</u>: Bob Dylan makes impact at NY folk clubs;</p> <p><u>Communes</u>: The Vale, a Quaker commune, founded at Yellow Springs, Ohio (Allied, unofficially, to Antioch College); The Bhodan Center of Inquiry, Oakhurst, California, a Quaker-oriented communal living experiment, dating back several years, emerges as one of the few survivors of an earlier boom in religious communes on the West Coast;</p>
1962	<p>Kennedy increases military aid to South Vietnam (January); USA resumes atmospheric nuclear testing (April); Rwanda and Burundi gain independence (July); Algeria gains independence (July); Amnesty International founded (October); Blockade against Cuba by U.S. (October);</p> <p>'Cuban Missile Crisis' - Soviet missile bases in Cuba decommissioned (November);</p> <p>ANC leader Nelson Mandela jailed (November);</p>	<p>'Port Huron Statement', manifesto of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) issued (June); Martin Luther King Jr. jailed for illegal march in Albany, Georgia (July); whites riot as James Meredith enrolls at Mississippi State University (September);</p>	<p><u>Living Theatre</u>: Second European tour; <i>Man is Man</i> (Bertolt Brecht);</p> <p><u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u>: <i>The Dowry</i> (after Molière and Goldoni); <i>Act Without Words II</i> (Beckett); <i>Who's Afraid</i> (Jonathan Altman); Film: <i>Plastic Haircut</i>;</p> <p><u>Performance Group</u>: Schechner completes Ph.D. (interviews Ionesco as part of the research in this year), and becomes editor of Tulane Drama Review (TDR); Schechner is involved in civil rights activities</p>	<p><u>Avant-garde/experimental</u>: <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> (Edward Albee); Theatre of Thirteen Rows: <i>Kordian</i> (Slowacki), <i>Akropolis</i> (Wyspianski);</p> <p><u>Off-off-Broadway</u>: Hardware Poets' Theatre established at Good Shepherd-Faith Presbyterian Church;</p> <p><u>Happenings</u>: <i>Courtyard</i> (Kaprow); <i>The Burning Building</i> (Red Grooms); <i>Hi-Ho Bibbe</i> (Al Hansen); <i>The Yam Festival</i>, from May 1962 to May 1963, featuring <i>Auction</i> (Al Hansen) and <i>Yam Hat Sale</i> (Alison Knowles); <i>Injun</i> (Claes Oldenburg); <i>Immaterial Pictorial Sensitivity Zone 5</i> (Yves Klein)</p> <p><u>Radical theatre</u>: Bread and Puppet Theatre formed by Peter Schumann - <i>Totentanz</i> produced NYC, at Judson Memorial Church;</p> <p><u>Other theatres</u>: Lincoln Center Repertory Theatre Company selected under aegis of</p>	<p>Michael Hollingshead introduces Leary and Alpert to LSD; Ken Kesey at Stanford championing a group of artists called the 'Neon Revolution', meets Neal Cassady;</p> <p><u>Literature</u>: Rachel Carson <i>Silent Spring</i>; Robert Creeley <i>For Love</i>; Anthony Burgess <i>A Clockwork Orange</i>; Ken Kesey <i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>; Daniel Bell <i>The End of Ideology</i>; Claude Levi-Strauss <i>The Savage Mind</i>; Aldous Huxley <i>Island</i>; Alan Watts <i>The Way of Zen</i>; Ed Sanders launches <i>Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts</i>; William Burroughs <i>Naked Lunch</i> (American publisher)</p> <p><u>Film</u>: Michelangelo Antonioni <i>L'Eclisse</i>; Francois Truffaut <i>Jules et Jim</i>; Stanley Kubrick <i>Lolita</i>; John Frankenheimer <i>The Manchurian Candidate</i>;</p> <p><u>Music</u>: Beach Boys <i>Surfin' Safari</i>;</p>

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				Elia Kazan and Robert Whitehead; <i>Dance: Five-Legged Stool</i> (Ann Halprin); Judson Dance Group established at Judson Memorial Church- first programme included <i>Shoulder</i> (Ruth Emerson), <i>Dance for 3 People and 6 Arms</i> (Yvonne Rainer), <i>Mannequin Dance</i> (David Gordon), <i>Transit</i> (Steve Paxton), <i>Once or Twice a Week I Put on Sneakers and Go Uptown</i> (Fred Herko), <i>Rain Fur</i> and <i>5 Things</i> (Deborah Hay);	<u>Communes</u> : Morningstar, near Sebastopol, Sonoma County, Northern California, founded by Lou Gottlieb; Gorda Mountain commune founded at Big Sur, Northern California;
1963	50,000 anti-nuclear protesters march in London (April); Premier Ngo Dinh Diem overthrown and assassinated in South Vietnam (November); John Kennedy assassinated (November);  Nuclear test-ban treaty signed between U.S., U.S.S.R., and Britain (August ); Kenya gains independence (December); American forces in Vietnam total 16,300 (December)	Martin Luther King Jr. arrested for leading civil rights march in Birmingham, Alabama (April); racial violence in Birmingham, Savannah, Cambridge, Md., Chicago, Philadelphia (spring); Kennedy sends federal troops to quell 'race riots' in the south (June); 200,000 march for civil rights in Washington – King's 'I have a dream' speech (August); four black children killed in church bomb blast in Birmingham (September); SDS involved in local community organising via Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) (August-December) [dissolved in spring 1965];	<u>Living Theatre</u> : <i>The Brig</i> (Kenneth Brown); Federal seizure by IRS of Living Theatre Playhouse for non-payment of taxes (October) – Living Theatre relocates to Europe the following year (August 1964); <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : Film: <i>Plastic Haircut</i> ; <i>Event II</i> ; <i>The Root</i> (Machiavelli/ Milton Savage); <i>Ruzzante's Maneuvers</i> (Milton Savage); <i>Ubu King</i> (Jarry) <u>Performance Group</u> : Richard Schechner involved in civil rights activities	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : Theatre of Thirteen Rows: <i>Dr. Faustus</i> (Marlowe); 'Avant-Garde Festival', Carnegie Recital Hall, organised by Charlotte Mormon; <i>Pelican</i> (Robert Rauschenberg); 'Fluxus Festival' , Düsseldorf Academy, organised by Joseph Beuys; <u>Off-off-Broadway</u> : <u>Happenings</u> : <i>The First and Second Wilderness</i> , a <i>Civil War Game</i> (Michael Kirby); <i>City Scale</i> (Ken Dewey); <i>Autobodys</i> (Claes Oldenburg); <u>Radical theatre</u> : Open Theatre founded by Joe Chaikin, includes erstwhile Living Theatre actors (February), first performances (December) sound and movement exercises, and improvisations e.g., <i>The Odets Kitchen</i> (Jean-Claude Van Itallie), <i>An Airplane: Its Passengers and Its Patent</i> (Van Itallie) ; Bread and Puppet Theatre establishes the 'Bread and Puppet Theatre Museum', Delancey St, N.Y.; Free Southern Theater of New Orleans formed by Gilbert Moses and John O'Neal (borne out of the civil rights movement in Mississippi); <u>Other theatres</u> : Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center <i>After the Fall</i> (A Miller); <u>Dance</u> : <i>Esposizione</i> (Ann Halprin); Judson Dance Group <i>Terrain</i> (Yvonne Rainer)	Andy Warhol founds The Factory; first major Pop Art exhibition at the Guggenheim, New York; 'Mod' style appears in UK; Pierre Cardin: 'Clothes are a form of protest'; <u>Literature</u> : Allen Ginsberg <i>Reality Sandwiches: 1953-1960</i> ; Betty Friedan <i>The Feminine Mystique</i> ; Konrad Lorenz <i>On Aggression</i> ; Kurt Vonnegut <i>Cat's Cradle</i> ; Mary McCarthy <i>The Group</i> ; <u>Film</u> : Stanley Kubrick <i>Dr Strangelove</i> ; Federico Fellini <i>81/2</i> ; Kenneth Anger <i>Scorpio Rising</i> ; <u>Music</u> : Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary create 'folk boom'; Dylan gives first major concert in New York; Beatles major UK tours, start of Beatlemania in UK; Beatles first LP <i>Please Please Me</i> ; Beach Boys <i>Surfin' USA</i> ; <i>Surfer Girl</i> ; <i>Little Deuce Coupe</i> ; Bob Dylan <i>The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan</i> ; <u>Communes</u> : Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert dismissed from Harvard over continuing drug experiments, and through a rich benefactor establish a utopian psychedelic community at Millbrook, Dutchess County, New York, in a large mansion on some four thousand acres;
1964	Nelson Mandela sentenced to life imprisonment (June); 'Tonkin Gulf Resolution' to protect U.S. forces (August); Krushchev	Malcolm X leaves Black Muslims and proposes all-black nationalist party (March); Progressive Labor Party (PL) formed by Communist	<u>Living Theatre</u> : Beginning of four-year period of almost constant touring (August 1964 – July 1968), new works are adapted or developed: <i>The Brig</i>	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : <i>Meat Joy</i> (Carolee Schneemann); <i>Variations IV</i> (John Cage); <i>The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys</i> (La Monte Young); Marat	Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters set out from San Francisco on cross-country tour in psychedelic bus 'Further', with Neal Cassady at the wheel, to visit Timothy

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	replaced by Brezhnev; China explodes its first atomic bomb (October); Lyndon B. Johnson elected U.S. president (November); Che Guevara meets with black militants in Harlem – Guevara not optimistic about guerrilla warfare in U.S. (December); American forces in Vietnam total 23,300 (December)	Party breakaway Progressive Labor Movement (April); Anti-draft, pro-Vietcong 'May Second Movement' (M2M) begins in U.S. (May); racial violence in Jacksonville, Cleveland (spring); Martin Luther King Jr. jailed for civil rights actions in Florida (June); racial violence in St. Augustine, Fl., (June); Lyndon Johnson signs Civil Rights Act (July); racial violence in Harlem, Brooklyn, Rochester (July), Jersey City, Elisabeth, Paterson NJ., Chicago, Philadelphia (August); Large-scale voter registration campaign in South (Summer); Free Speech Movement (FSM) launched at Berkeley (October); FSM-backed student occupation of Berkeley (December);	(Kenneth Brown) toured; <i>Mysteries and Smaller Pieces</i> (Living Theatre) (1964); <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : <i>Mime(s)</i> and <i>Movie (Mime(s); Plastic Haircut; Act Without Words II); Event II (Coffee Break); Tartuffe</i> (Molière/ Richard Sassoon); <i>Chorizos</i> ; <u>Performance Group</u> : Schechner becomes involved with the Free Southern Theatre of New Orleans (as co-director with John O'Neal and Gilbert Moses); Schechner directs <i>Purlie Victorious</i> at Free Southern Theater.	<i>Sade</i> (Peter Weiss); <u>Off-off-Broadway</u> : American Place Theater established at St. Clement's Church; Theatre Genesis established at St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie; <u>Happenings</u> : <i>You</i> (Wolf Vostell) <u>Radical theatre</u> : three members of Actor's Workshop (Lee Breuer, Ruth Maleczek, JoAnne Akalaitis) begin to collaborate in what will later become Mabou Mines; <u>Other theatres</u> : Le Roi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka) <i>Dutchman and the Slave</i> (OBIE winner); Philadelphia's Theatre of the Living Arts established – with Andre Gregory as Artistic Director; <u>Dance</u> : <i>Parades and Changes</i> (Ann Halprin);	Leary's Millbrook psychedelic commune and to celebrate publication of Kesey's new novel in NY. They meet Kerouac who is diffident about the new beatniks; <u>Literature</u> : Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, Richard Alpert <i>The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead</i> ; Herbert Marcuse <i>One Dimensional Man</i> ; McLuhan <i>Understanding Media</i> ; Ken Kesey <i>Sometimes a Great Notion</i> ; Richard Brautigan <i>A Confederate General from Big Sur</i> ; Michael McClure <i>Ghost Tantras</i> ; Timothy Leary et al. Launch <i>The Psychedelic Review</i> ; <i>Los Angeles Free Press</i> launched; <u>Film</u> : Stanley Kubrick <i>Dr. Strangelove</i> ; Sidney Lumet <i>Fail Safe</i> ; Richard Lester <i>A Hard Day's Night</i> (The Beatles); <u>Music</u> : Beatles tour America; Beatles <i>With the Beatles</i> ; <i>A Hard Day's Night</i> (released in the U.S. as <i>Something New</i> ); <i>Beatles For Sale</i> ; <i>Beach Boys All Summer Long</i> ; Rolling Stones <i>Rolling Stones</i> ; <i>Rolling Stones No.2</i> ; Bob Dylan <i>The Times They Are A-Changin'</i> ; <i>Another Side of</i> ; Kinks <i>The Kinks</i> ; Animals <i>The Animals</i> ; <u>Communes</u> :
1965	U.S. begins bombing of North Vietnam – Operation 'Rolling Thunder' (March); U.S. increases military aid to South Vietnam (April); Anti-Vietnam demonstrations in Paris (April); U.S. troops first engagement of Vietcong east of Saigon (June); India and Pakistan clash over Kashmir (August); American forces in Vietnam total 183,000 (December)	Malcolm X assassinated (February); Martin Luther King Jr. arrested in Selma, Alabama (February); First 'Vietnam Day Teach-In' at University of Michigan (March); King leads civil rights march in Montgomery, Alabama (March); Anti-Vietnam war march on Washington (April); First burning of draft cards (....); Major Vietnam Day Committee Teach-In at Berkeley (May); President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act (August); Watts Riots, LA – 34 killed, hundreds injured, 4,000 arrested, \$35 million in damage – worst since Detroit riot in 1943 (August); Anti-war protest in Berkeley draws 14,000 marchers	<u>Living Theatre</u> (touring Europe Aug. 1964- July 1968): <i>The Brig</i> ; <i>The Maids</i> (Jean Genet) (1965); <i>Frankenstein</i> (Mary Shelley/Living Theatre) (1965); <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : <i>The Exception and the Rule</i> (Brecht); <i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i> (Ron Davis and Saul Landau); <i>Candelaio</i> (Bruno/ Peter Berg); <i>Chronicles of Hell</i> (Ghelderode); <u>Performance Group</u> : Schechner forms the New Orleans Group with painter Franklin Adams and musician Paul Epstein.	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : <i>Variations V and Rozart Mix</i> (John Cage); Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium (Laboratory Theatre) <i>The Constant Prince</i> (Calderon/ Slowacki); <u>Off-off-Broadway</u> : <i>Motel</i> (Jean-Claude Van Itallie) at Café La Mama; Chelsea Theatre established at St. Peter's Church; <u>Happenings</u> : <i>Map Room II</i> (Robert Rauschenberg); <i>Washes and Moviehouse</i> (Claes Oldenburg); <i>Twenty-four Hours</i> (Joseph Beuys); TDR special issue on Happenings <u>Radical theatre</u> : Bread and Puppet Theatre <i>Fire and Burning Towns</i> , and <i>Gas for Vietnam</i> ; El Teatro Campesino formed by Luis Valdez (after brief period of Valdez' membership of San Francisco	Free School of New York founded (free university); Ken Kesey and The Merry Pranksters take LSD, thanks principally to Augustus Owsley Stanley III and his Bay Area acid evangelism; Bread and Puppet Theatre stages or participates in several anti-Vietnam war marches; <u>Literature</u> : Malcolm X <i>Autobiography of Malcolm X</i> ; Lewis Yablonsky <i>The Tunnel Back</i> ; Synanon; Berkeley Barb founded by Max Scherr; <i>East Village Other</i> founded by Walter Bowitz; <u>Film</u> : Jean-Luc Godard <i>Alphaville</i> , <i>Pierrot le Fou</i> , <i>Masculin Feminin</i> ; Roman Polanski <i>Repulsion</i> ; Michelangelo Antonioni <i>Il Deserto Rosso</i> ; Richard Lester <i>Help!</i> (The Beatles);

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		(October); Anti-Vietnam war march on Washington (November);		Mime Troupe); Play-House of the Ridiculous formed in New York by John Vaccaro and Ronald Tavel; Open Theatre <i>Clown Play</i> (Bertolt Brecht), <i>Sweeney Agonistes</i> (T.S. Eliot), <i>The Trial of Judith and Julian Beck</i> (based on transcripts); <u>Other theatres</u> : Herbert Blau and Jules Irving resign from Actor's workshop of San Francisco to head ill-starred Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center; <u>Dance</u> : <i>Waterman Switch</i> (Robert Morris, Lucinda Childs, Yvonne Rainer); <i>Site</i> (Robert Morris, Carolee Schneemann)	<u>Music</u> : Grateful Dead, Charlatans, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Jefferson Airplane main players in burgeoning San Francisco music scene; Ben and Rain Jacopetti start an Open Theater in Berkeley and trigger psychedelic 'light show' phenomenon that characterises music shows in Bay Area; Family Dog concerts, Acid Tests, Trips Festivals and other psychedelic dance events begin to sweep Bay Area; Bob Dylan appears at Newport Jazz Festival with electric guitar (July); Byrds <i>Mr Tambourine Man</i> ; <i>Turn! Turn! Turn!</i> ; Beatles <i>Help!</i> ; <i>Rubber Soul</i> ; Rolling Stones <i>Out of Our Heads</i> ; <i>Who My Generation</i> ; Bob Dylan <i>Bringin' It All Back Home</i> ; <i>Highway 61 Revisited</i> ; Them <i>Them</i> ; The Lovin' Spoonful <i>Do You Believe In Magic</i> ; <u>Communes</u> : Drop City founded near Trinidad, Colorado; Motherfuckers commune, NYC;
1966	Mao Tse Tung declares 'Cultural Revolution' or purges in China (May); Charles Whitman shoots 12 people from the tower of Texas University, Austin (August); Ronald Reagan elected governor of California; American forces in Vietnam total 185,300 (December)	National Organization for Women (date ???); M2M dissolves and absorbed into SDS (January); Racial violence in Watts (March); 8000 Vietnam protesters encircle the Pentagon in order to 'levitate' it (May); 'Black Power', popularised by Stokely Carmichael, becomes common coinage in the wake of Meredith March (during which Meredith is shot) from Memphis to Jackson (June); racial violence in Chicago, Cleveland, Baltimore (July); Black Panther Party founded in Oakland (October); Sunset Strip riots in LA (November); Anti-Vietnam war demonstration in New York (November);	<u>Living Theatre</u> (touring Europe Aug. 1964- July 1968): <i>The Brig</i> ; <i>Mysteries</i> ; <i>The Maids</i> ; <i>Frankenstein</i> ; <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u> : <i>What's that a Head?</i> (Barbara LaMorticello); <i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i> (West Coast college tour); Traps Festival: <i>Jack Off! - A Girly Show</i> (Judy Goldhaft); Film: <i>Mirage</i> (Peter Weiss) and <i>Centerman</i> (Borchert/ Peter Berg); <i>Olive Pits</i> (de Ruedel/ Peter Cohon/Peter Berg et al.); <i>The Miser</i> (Molière/ Frank Bardacke); <i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i> (Mid-West/NY tour); <u>Performance Group</u> : New Orleans Group presents 4/66 a happening-like event inspired by John Cage, Allen Kaprow, et al.	<u>Avant-garde/experimental</u> : San Francisco Diggers formed from within ranks of, but quickly seceding from, the San Francisco Mime Troupe (August/ September) – while not strictly a theatre group nor simply a political Organization, they used their theatrical skills to great advantage over the next two years (See Appendix P for Digger Chronology) <u>Off-off-Broadway</u> : Megan Terry's <i>Viet Rock</i> at Café La Mama (May), not an official Open Theatre production but associated with Open Theatre; <u>Happenings</u> : <i>Eurasia</i> (Joseph Beuys); [Books] Michael Kirby <i>Happenings</i> ; Allan Kaprow <i>Assemblages</i> , <i>Environments &amp; Happenings</i> ; <u>Radical theatre</u> : El Teatro Campesino <i>La Quinta Temporada</i> ; Open Theatre <i>Interview</i> (Jean-Claude Van Itallie), first part of <i>American Hurrah</i> trilogy, TV (Jean-Claude Van Itallie), second part of <i>American Hurrah</i> trilogy; Bread and Puppet Theatre <i>Shark Plane</i> ;	<i>Time</i> declares 'Swinging London' the 'City of the Decade', also declares the 'Younger Generation' as its Man of the Year; <i>Life International</i> runs a spread on the 'Swinging Revolution', taking in London, Paris, and Chicago, and profiles the Dutch 'Provos', an anarchist group based in Amsterdam; John Lennon quoted by <i>Evening Standard</i> as saying 'We're more popular than Jesus now'; The Trips Festival, successor to the Acid Tests, takes place in San Francisco; Possession of LSD is made a misdemeanour and dealing a felony in the U.S.; The Psychedelic Shop, owned by Ron and Jay Thelin, opens in Haight Street, San Francisco – Ron Thelin is the first of the 'Haight Independent Proprietors (H.I.P.)', but he quickly defects to Hippie causes; LSD outlawed in California; Ex-New York <i>Beatitude</i> editor Chester Anderson co-founds The Communications Company, a countercultural broadsheet and Digger organ, with <i>Ramparts</i> employee Claude Hayward; London Free School launched;

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				<p><u>Other theatres:</u> Yale Repertory Theatre founded by Robert Brustein; Negro Ensemble Company formed in New York by Douglas Turner Ward, Robert Hooks, and Gerald S. Korne; <i>MacBird</i> (Barbara Garson);</p> <p><u>Dance:</u> <i>The Mind</i> (Yvonne Rainer)</p>	<p>attempting to democratise education;</p> <p><u>Literature:</u> Susan Sontag <i>Against Interpretation</i>; Norman O. Brown <i>Love's Body</i>; John Gruen <i>The New Bohemia: The Combine Generation</i>; Richard Alpert and Sidney Cohen <i>LSD</i>; Masters and Johnson <i>Human Sexual Response</i>; Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau <i>The New Radicals</i>; Philip Slater <i>Microcosm</i>; Hunter S. Thompson <i>Hell's Angels</i>; Thomas Pynchon <i>The Crying of Lot 49</i>; Tom McGrath launches <i>International Times</i>; Allen Cohen launches <i>City of San Francisco Oracle (The Oracle)</i>;</p> <p><u>Film:</u> Jean-Luc Godard <i>Made in USA</i>; Roger Corman <i>The Wild Angels</i>; Michelangelo Antonioni <i>Blow-up</i>; Francois Truffaut <i>Fahrenheit 451</i>; Andy Warhol <i>Chelsea Girls</i>; Roman Polanski <i>Cul de Sac</i>;</p> <p><u>Music:</u> Beatles <i>Revolver</i>; Bob Dylan <i>Blonde on Blonde</i>; Rolling Stones <i>Aftermath</i>; <i>big Hits (High Tide And Green Grass)</i>; Beach Boys <i>Pet Sounds</i>; <i>Summer Days and Summer Nights</i>; Jefferson Airplane <i>Jefferson Airplane Takes Off</i>; Mamas and Papas <i>If You Can Believe Your Eyes And Ears</i>; Yardbirds <i>Yardbirds</i>; Byrds <i>5th Dimension</i>; The Who <i>My Generation</i>;</p> <p><u>Communes:</u> Morningstar (dating back to 1962) in Sonoma County opened up by Lou Gottlieb and Ramon Sender; Hog Farm commune, populated by Ken Kesey's Merry Pranksters, established in Hollywood hills, Los Angeles;</p>
1967	Cultural Revolution gathers pace in China- universities closed, teachers persecuted, books banned (January); Student violence at the London School of Economics (January); Six-day War between Israel and Egypt (June); <i>Torrey Canyon</i> supertanker oil spill of Land's End, England (March); Biafra declares independence from Nigeria (May); Che Guevara killed in Bolivia (October);	The 'Resistance' formed by former SNCC workers and Berkeley activists to co-ordinate national anti-draft campaign (March); Antiwar demonstration at Sheep's Meadow in New York's Central Park – crowd estimated at 250,000, Cornell students symbolically burn draft cards (April); Black Panthers demonstrate at California State legislature, Sacramento (May); racial violence in Nashville (April),	<p><u>Living Theatre</u> (touring Europe Aug. 1964- July 1968): <i>The Brig</i>; <i>Mysteries</i>; <i>The Maids</i>; <i>Frankenstein</i>; <i>Antigone</i> (Sophocles/Hölderlin/Brecht/Living Theatre (1967);</p> <p><u>San Francisco Mime Troupe:</u> <i>The Condemned</i> (Sartre); <i>The Vaudeville Show</i>; <i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i> (East Coast/Canada); <i>L'Amant Militaire</i> (Goldini/ [tr]Betty Schwimmer and [ad]Joan Holden); <i>Olive</i></p>	<p><u>Avant-garde/experimental:</u> <i>Variations VII</i> (John Cage);</p> <p><u>Off-off-Broadway:</u></p> <p><u>Radical theatre:</u> Open Theatre <i>Motel</i> (Jean-Claude Van Itallie), third part of <i>American Hurrah</i> trilogy, <i>Masks</i>, and <i>Ubu Cocu</i> (Alfred Jarry); Andre Gregory resigns from the Theatre of the Living Arts in Philadelphia amid controversy – he then founds the Manhattan Project, affiliated to New York University; New</p>	A Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco (January); Monterey Pop Festival (June); an estimated 75,000 young people descend on San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury in the 'Summer of Love', Solstice party in Golden Gate Park organised by Diggers (June); Los Angeles 'Love-In' (July); 'Dialectics of Liberation' conference at Roundhouse, London – Allen Ginsberg, R.D. Laing, Paul Goodman, Stokely Carmichael,

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	American forces in Vietnam total 465,600 –9,378 dead (December)	Jackson, Houston (May), Tampa, Cincinnati, Atlanta (June), Newark, Jersey City, New Brunswick, Englewood, Plainfield [all New Jersey] (June-July), Detroit – 43 killed, \$40 million in damage (July); Riots in Boston, Student protests against Marines, CIA, Dow Chemicals [check date for latter] (June); SDS 'Back to the drawing board' 6 <sup>th</sup> national conference at Denton, Michigan –disrupted by Diggers, including ex-members of San Francisco Mime Troupe (June); Oakland Induction Center anti-draft demonstration (arrests lead to Oakland 7 trial); Pentagon protest by Mailer et al., 50,000 take part (October); Anti-draft demonstrations in New York (November); Berkeley 'Mill-in' by 1,000 students (November); Violent demonstrations at San Francisco State College (December)	<i>Pits</i> (second version); <i>L'Amant Militaire</i> and/or <i>Olive Pits</i> Mid-West/East Coast Tour; <u>Performance Group</u> : New Orleans Group presents Ionesco's <i>Victims of Duty</i> (May); Schechner moves to New York to take up professorship at New York University (June/July); <i>Guerrilla Warfare</i> (NYU students) (October); Founds the Performance Group in New York (November);	Lafayette Theatre founded in Harlem by Ed Bullins and Robert Macbeth; Ridiculous Theatre Company founded in New York by Charles Ludlam; <u>Other theatres</u> : <i>Hair – The American Tribal Love- Rock Musical</i> (Jerome Ragni, James Rado, Galt McDermott) begins 8-week off-Broadway season at Joseph Papp's Festival Shakespeare Public Theater, New York (October); <u>Dance</u> :	Emmett Grogan attendance (July); 'Festival of Flower Children' , Woburn Abbey (August); 'Death of Hippie' ceremony in Haight-Ashbury (October); <u>Literature</u> : Chairman Mao <i>Quotations from Chairman Mao</i> (aka. <i>Little Red Book</i> ); Timothy Leary <i>Psychedelic Prayers after the Tao Te Ching</i> ; Stokeley Carmichael and Charles Hamilton <i>Black Power</i> ; Eldridge Cleaver <i>Soul on Ice</i> ; R.D. Laing <i>The Politics of Experience</i> ; Claude Levi-Strauss <i>The Elementary Structure of Kinship</i> (revised edition of 1949 original); Marshall McLuhan <i>The Medium is the Message</i> ; Guy Debord <i>Society of the Spectacle</i> ; Norman Mailer <i>Why Are We in Vietnam?</i> ; George Andrews and Simon Vinkenoog <i>The Book of Grass: An Anthology on Indian Hemp</i> ; Richard Brautigan <i>Trout Fishing in America</i> ; Richard Neville launches <i>OZ</i> ; Jan Wenner launches <i>Rolling Stone</i> ; <u>Film</u> : Jean-Luc Godard <i>La Chinoise</i> ; Mike Nichols <i>The Graduate</i> ; Arthur Penn <i>Bonnie and Clyde</i> ; Roger Corman <i>The Trip</i> ; Gillo Pontecorvo <i>The Battle of Algiers</i> (U.S. release, Europe 1965) <u>Music</u> : Beatles <i>Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band</i> ; Rolling Stones <i>Between the Buttons</i> ; <i>Their Satanic Majesties Request</i> ; Cream <i>Fresh Cream</i> ; <i>Disraeli Gears</i> ; Byrds <i>Younger Than Yesterday</i> ; Jefferson Airplane <i>Surrealistic Pillow</i> ; Big Brother And The Holding Company <i>Cheap Thrills</i> ; Moby Grape <i>Moby Grape</i> ; Grateful Dead <i>Grateful Dead</i> ; Country Joe And The Fish <i>Electric Music For The Mind And Body</i> ; Buffalo Springfield <i>Buffalo Springfield</i> ; Jimi Hendrix <i>Experience Are You Experienced</i> ; Axis: <i>Bold As Love</i> ; Pink Floyd <i>Piper At The Gates Of Dawn</i> ; Doors <i>The Doors</i> ; Love <i>Da Capo</i> ; <i>Forever Changes</i> ; Scott McKenzie <i>San Francisco</i> (45); Beatles <i>All You Need Is Love</i> (45); <u>Communes</u> : Wheeler Ranch founded at Occidental, California, by Bill Wheeler;



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					Black Bear Ranch, in Trinity-Siskiyou Wilderness, Northern California, founded by Elsa and Richard Marley (paid for largely by donations from the hip/artistic community) – this was a Digger/Free Family initiative; Cold Mountain Farm, Vermont (started by members of the Motherfuckers from New York); Lama Foundation, New Buffalo (Arroyo Hondo) founded near Taos, New Mexico; Hog Farm founded north of Los Angeles; Red House (a house owned by Ron and Marsha Thelin) commune starts in Forest Knolls, west Marin County (used by Diggers and ex-Mime Troupers); Peace and Liberation Commune founded in Palo Alto, California; Ananda Cooperative Farm founded near Nevada City, California;
1968	<p>North Vietnamese launch 'Tet offensive' (January); Massacre of approx. 450 Vietnamese villagers at My Lai 4 by members of Charlie Company, led by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant William Calley Jr. (March); U.S. partially halts bombing of North Vietnam (April); 'Prague Spring', Czechoslovakia (January-May); French students riot at the Sorbonne/street fighting in the Latin Quarter French workers call general strike in support of students, Paris (May); Student riots/revolts in numerous European cities; Bobby Hutton (Black Panther) shot; Andy Warhol shot by Valerie Solanas (June);</p> <p>Robert Kennedy assassinated (June); French elections take place amid riots – Gaullists defeat Communists in landslide (June); Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia (August); Mexican students massacred at protest rally in Mexico City (September); Royal Ulster Constabulary attacks Catholic</p>	<p>Redstockings feminist Organization formed in New York (January); Martin Luther King Jr. launches Poor People's Campaign (January); Arrest of Bobby Seale and other Black Panthers (February); Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated (April); Occupation of Columbia University by students, mainly SDS (April); Berkeley students clash with police (June); serious rift in SDS, (between 'New Left' and Progressive Labour Party factions) at 8<sup>th</sup> national convention at Michigan State University (MSU) (June); Violent clashes between police and demonstrators at Chicago Democratic Convention (August); Riots in Watts, LA (August); SDS organizers tour Midwestern campuses to recruit members and stage demonstrations (incl. some guerrilla theatre) (August-September); SDS battle continues at MSU - 'Jesse James Gang' vs. Radical Caucus (September); The Feminists formed as a breakaway group from NOW (October); Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell</p>	<p><u>Living Theatre</u>: (touring Europe Aug. 1964- July 1968) <i>The Brig</i>; <i>Mysteries</i>; <i>The Maids</i>; <i>Frankenstein</i>; <i>Antigone</i>; <i>Paradise Now</i> (Living Theatre);</p> <p><i>Paradise Now</i> U.S. (largely college-based) tour. <i>Mysteries</i>, <i>Frankenstein</i>, and <i>Antigone</i> (September 1968- March 1969);</p> <p><u>San Francisco Mime Troupe</u>: <i>Ruzzante or the Veteran</i> (Beolco/ Joan Holden); [Gutter Puppets: <i>Metermaid</i>; <i>Little Black Panther</i>]; <i>The Farce of Patelin</i> (R.G. Davis and Jael Weisman); [Childrens' Theatre: '<i>Kill</i>' <i>Santa Claus</i>];</p> <p><u>Performance Group</u>: <i>Dionysus in 69</i> (June – runs almost continuously until July 1969);</p> <p><i>Makbeth</i> (after William Shakespeare) initial rehearsal/workshop work</p>	<p><u>Avant-garde/experimental</u>: Teatr Laboratorium (Laboratory Theatre) <i>Apocalypsis Cum Figuris</i>; [Books] Peter Brook <i>The Empty Space</i>; Jerzy Grotowski <i>Towards a Poor Theatre</i> (Denmark); Richard Kostelanetz <i>The Theatre of Mixed Means: An Introduction to Happenings, Kinetic Environments and other Mixed Means Performances</i>.</p> <p><u>Off-off-Broadway</u>:</p> <p><u>Radical theatre</u>: Open Theatre <i>The Serpent</i> (Jean-Claude Van Itallie); Bread and Puppet Theatre <i>A Man Says Goodbye to His Mother</i>; Sept. 25-29: 'Radical Theatre Festival' at San Francisco State College; Peter Schumann starts a Bread and Puppet 'commune' in Maine; Dario Fo founds La Nuova Scena, writes <i>Grand Pantomime with Flags and Small and Medium-Sized Puppets</i>; [Books] Richard Schechner <i>Public Domain</i>.</p> <p><u>Other theatres</u>: <i>Hair</i> begins highly successful run on Broadway (some 1750 performances between 1968-1970); <i>Indians</i> (Arthur Kopit); <i>The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel</i> (David Rabe);</p>	<p>Beatles go to India to study with Maharishi Maresh Yogi (February); East Coast Anarchist Group, led by Murray Bookchin, starts publishing <i>Anarchos</i> journal in NYC (February); Abbie and Anita Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Nancy Kirshan, and Paul Krassner found 'Yippies', or Youth International Party; Andy Warhol shot, but not fatally wounded, by Valerie Solanis (June);</p> <p><u>Literature</u>: Timothy Leary <i>The Politics of Ecstasy</i>; Tom Wolfe <i>The Electric Kool-aid Acid Test</i>; Abbie Hoffman <i>Revolution for the Hell of It</i>; Norman Mailer <i>Armies of the Night</i>; Helen Perry <i>The Human Be-In</i>; Gary Snyder <i>Back Country</i>; Leonard Wolf <i>Voices of the Love Generation</i>; Nicholas Von Hoffman <i>We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against</i>; Joan Didion <i>Slouching Towards Bethlehem</i>; Lewis Yablonsky <i>The Hippie Trip</i>; Guy Endore <i>Synanon</i>; Idries Shah <i>The Way of the Sufi</i>; Carlos Castaneda <i>The Teachings of Don Juan</i>; Daniel Cohn-Bendit <i>Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative</i>; David Cooper (ed.) <i>The Dialectics of Liberation</i>; <i>The Rat</i> launched by Jeff Shero;</p> <p><u>Film</u>: Jean-Luc Godard <i>Weekend, One</i></p>

Year	U.S./World Politics	The New Left/Civil Rights/Civil Unrest/ 'Movement'	The Living Theatre/San Francisco Mime Troupe/Performance Group	Avant-garde performance/radical theatres/other arts influences	The counterculture
	civil rights marchers in Londonderry (October); Richard Nixon elected U.S. president (November); American forces in Vietnam total 536,000 – 14,592 dead (December)	(WITCH) formed (October); Teachers' strike and student revolts at San Francisco State College (November);		<u>Dance:</u>	<i>Plus One</i> ; Stanley Kubrick <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> ; <u>Music:</u> Beatles <i>The Beatles (White Album)</i> ; Rolling Stones <i>Beggars Banquet</i> ; Cream <i>Wheels of Fire</i> ; Doors <i>Waiting for the Sun</i> ; Grateful Dead <i>Anthem Of The Sun</i> ; Buffalo Springfield <i>Buffalo Springfield Again</i> ; Byrds <i>The Notorious Byrd Brothers</i> ; Jimi Hendrix Experience <i>Electric Ladyland</i> ; Beatles <i>Hey Jude/Revolution (45)</i> ; <u>Communes:</u> Family of Mystic Arts founded near Sunny Valley, Oregon; Libre founded in southern Colorado; Talsalsan, and Saddle Ridge Farm founded in southern Oregon; Bryn Athyn, Vermont; Sun Farm Placitas, New Mexico; Olema, near Point Reyes Station, Northern California – another Digger venture; Weathermen/ Weather Underground cells formed in several Mid Western and Eastern states (off-shoots of SDS but with severe Maoist communal structures);
1969	Catholics riot in Londonderry (January); Suicide of Jan Palach, Prague (January); U.S. Apollo 11 Moon landing (July); British troops begin patrolling Catholic area of Belfast (August); Lt. William Calley charged with ordering massacre at My Lai 4 (November); Nixon administration publicly appears to further endorse withdrawal from military involvement in Vietnam (November); Terrorist bombings in Italy (December); American forces in Vietnam total 475,000 – 9,414 dead (December)	Widespread campus protests and violence across U.S. – Berkeley, Madison, Harvard, City College of New York (January-April); People's Park established at contested university land site in Berkeley (Spring); violence at People's Park (May); Citywide women's liberation coalition formed in New York (spring); Murder of a police officer in San Francisco leads to 'Los Siete' trial of seven latino youths (May); SDS national convention in Chicago – Radical Youth Movement (RYM), soon to be called 'Weathermen' formed as SDS begins to splinter (June); Stonewall Inn gay rights rioting in New York (July); Weathermen actions in Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, (July-September); Chicago 8 conspiracy trial in Chicago (October); Weathermen 'Four Days of Rage' (ostensibly an anti-war	<u>Living Theatre:</u> <i>Paradise Now</i> U.S. tour (September 1968 – March 1969); <i>Paradise Now</i> European tour. <i>Mysteries</i> , <i>Frankenstein</i> , and <i>Antigone</i> (April 1969-January 1970); decision in August, <i>en route</i> to Italy from Morocco, to divide Living Theatre into different cells at the conclusion of existing tour commitments <u>San Francisco Mime Troupe:</u> <i>The Congress of Whitewashers or Turandot</i> (Brecht) (March 1969 – March 1970); unofficial change of leadership and reorganisation of the group after R.G. Davis goes on leave (December) <u>Performance Group:</u> <i>Makbeth</i> rehearsal work throughout 1969; internal conflict within group escalates as year progresses; <i>Makbeth</i> (December-January 1970)	<u>Avant-garde/experimental:</u> Robert Wilson <i>The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud</i> [Books] Jerzy Grotowski <i>Towards a Poor Theatre</i> (England) <u>Off-off-Broadway:</u> <u>Radical theatre:</u> Open Theatre <i>Terminal</i> (Susan Yankowitz); Bread and Puppet Theatre <i>The Cry of the People for Meat</i> ; Mabou Mines (Lee Breuer, Ruth Maleczek, JoAnne Akalaitis, Philip Glass, David Warrilow) <i>Red Horse Animation</i> ; <i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i> (Dario Fo); [Books] Richard Schechner ed. <i>Dionysus in 69: The Performance Group</i> <u>Other theatres:</u> <u>Dance:</u> <i>Juice</i> (Meredith Monk)	Photographic essay on commune movement published by <i>Life</i> 'The Commune Comes to America', featuring Family of Mystic Arts; 1969 declared the 'year of the commune' by the media; Death of Jack Kerouac; Gary Hinman, Sharon Tate, and LaBianca murders by Manson 'Family' (July/August); Woodstock Music and Art Fair (August); Altamont Speedway Rock Concert (December); <u>Literature:</u> Diane DiPrima <i>Memoirs of a Beantnik</i> ; Gary Snyder <i>Earth House Hold</i> ; Norman Mailer <i>Miami and the Siege of Chicago</i> ; Abbie Hoffman <i>Woodstock Nation</i> ; Liberation News Service <i>A Book for a Fighting Movement</i> (aka <i>The Bust Book</i> ); Joseph Burke <i>Counter Culture</i> ; Vine Deloria <i>Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto</i> ; Kate Millett <i>Sexual Politics</i> ; Theodore Roszak <i>The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition</i> ; Herbert Marcuse <i>An Essay</i>

Year	U.S./World Politics	The New Left/Civil Rights/Civil Unrest/ 'Movement'	The Living Theatre/San Francisco Mime Troupe/Performance Group	Avant-garde performance/radical theatres/other arts influences	The counterculture
		demonstration) in Chicago (October); Mobilization Moratorium in Washington (November); Stanton-Anthony Brigade of the Radical Feminists formed (November); 'Red Power' native American occupation of Alcatraz, San Francisco Bay (November); Black Panther Fred Hampton shot in bed by police in Chicago (December);			<p><i>on Liberation</i>; Kurt Vonnegut <i>Slaughterhouse Five</i>; James Kunen <i>The Strawberry Statement</i>;</p> <p><b>Film:</b> Dennis Hopper <i>Easy Rider</i>; John Schlesinger <i>Midnight Cowboy</i>; Arthur Penn <i>Alice's Restaurant</i>; Haskell Wexler <i>Medium Cool</i>; Federico Fellini <i>Satyricon</i>; Paul Mazursky <i>Bob &amp; Carol &amp; Ted &amp; Alice</i>; Lindsay Anderson <i>If . . .</i>;</p> <p><b>Music:</b> Jim Morrison arrested for exposing himself during Doors concert in Miami (March); former Rolling Stone Brian Jones dies under suspicious circumstances (July); Beatles <i>Abbey Road</i>; Grateful Dead <i>Aoxomoxoa</i>; Sly And The Family Stone <i>Stand!</i>;</p> <p><b>Communes:</b> Charles Manson and up to 30 others living variously at Spahn Movie Ranch, Chatsworth, and at Barker, and Myers Ranches, Panamint Mountains, Death Valley; Tolstoy Farm founded near Davenport, Washington; Crook's Creek founded near Sunny Valley, Oregon; Morning Star East, and Reality Construction Company (plus others) founded near Taos, New Mexico; Maharaj Ashram founded near Santa Fe, New Mexico;</p>
1970	British troops seal off Bogside area of Londonderry (March); US attacks Cambodia (April); Maoist students riot in Paris (May); Definitive account of My Lai massacre appears in <i>Harper's</i> magazine by Seymour Hersh; violent Catholic demonstrations in Belfast (July); American forces in Vietnam total 334,600 (December) – the eventual totals, as at cease-fire of January 1973, are approximately 45,997 killed in combat, 10,928 in non-combat situations, 303,640 wounded, 600 captured, and 1,300 M.I.A.	SDS disintegrates (January-March); Three Weathermen killed making bombs in basement of apartment in New York (March); student unrest at Kent State University, Ohio (April); Seattle Liberation Front arrests (April); National Guardsmen kill four Kent State students (May); Six blacks shot and killed at a rally in Georgia (May); Riots in Asbury Park, N.J. – 46 people shot (May); sporadic Weathermen bombings (March-November); Weathermen assist Timothy Leary in escaping from prison in San Luis Obispo, California (September); Students burn draft cards in a memorial at Kent State (September);	<p><b>Living Theatre:</b> Announcement in January that the Living Theatre is dividing into four 'cells' in four different locations (Berlin, Paris or London, India, Amsterdam)</p> <p><b>San Francisco Mime Troupe:</b> <i>The Congress of Whitewashers</i> finishes (March); Troupe re-constituted as a collective;</p> <p><i>The Independent Female</i> or <i>A Man has his Pride</i>; <i>Ecoman</i>; <i>Telephone Man</i> or <i>Ripping Off Ma Bell</i>; <i>Los Siete</i> (based upon the analysis by defence lawyers of a case involving the alleged killing of a police officers by seven Latino youths); <i>Seize the Time</i> (based on Bobby Seale's book of the same name about the 'Chicago Eight conspiracy' trial</p> <p><b>Performance Group:</b> TPG reconstituted</p>	<p><b>Avant-garde/experimental:</b></p> <p><b>Radical theatre:</b> It's Alright to Be a Woman Theatre founded in New York; El Teatro Campesino Vietnam Campesino; Peter Schumann leaves New York for Cote Farm, Plainfield, Vermont, later Glover, Vermont; Dario Fo founds Il Collettivo Teatrale la Commune; [Books] Aldo Rostagno <i>We, the Living Theatre</i>; Renfreu Neff <i>The Living Theatre</i>; Robert Pasolli <i>A Book on the Open Theatre</i>; Michael Smith <i>Theatre Trip</i>.</p> <p><b>Other theatres:</b> [Books] John Lahr <i>Up Against the Fourth Wall: Essays on the Modern Theater</i>.</p>	<p><b>Literature:</b> Charles Reich <i>The Greening of America</i>; Jerry Rubin <i>Do It! Scenarios of the Revolution</i>; Robin Morgan (ed.) <i>Sisterhood is Powerful</i>; Bobby Seale <i>Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton</i>; Richard Neville <i>Play Power</i>; Mitchell Goodman <i>The Movement Towards A New America: The Beginnings of a Long Revolution</i>; Philip Slater <i>The Pursuit of Loneliness</i>; Alvin Toffler <i>Future Shock</i>; Germaine Greer <i>The Female Eunuch</i>;</p> <p><b>Film:</b> Michelangelo Antonioni <i>Zabriskie Point</i>; David and Albert Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin <i>Gimme Shelter</i>; Richard Rush <i>Getting Straight</i>; Bob Rafelson <i>Five Easy Pieces</i>; Robert Altman <i>M*A*S*H</i>; Michael Wadleigh <i>Woodstock</i>; Stuart Hagmann <i>The Strawberry Statement</i>; Nicholas Roeg</p>

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			by Richard Schechner (March); <i>Government Anarchy</i> , a work created for ACLU meeting, is presented at the Electric Circus (May); rehearsals/ workshops for <i>Commune</i> (summer); <i>Commune</i> opens (December – runs until spring 1972)		<i>Performance</i> ; Beatles <i>Let It Be</i> ; <i>Music</i> ; Beatles break up (April); Jimi Hendrix dies of drug overdose (September); Janis Joplin dies of drug overdose (October); Rolling Stones <i>Let It Bleed</i> ; Beatles <i>Let It Be</i> ; <i>Communes</i> ; Rockridge, New Mexico (May); Lorian Institute for Liberal Arts (LILA) founded near Taos, New Mexico;

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## Appendix C: The Living Theatre in New York 1951-64

1951			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Jul. 1: Beck rents Cherry Lane Theatre at 38 Commerce Street, Greenwich Village, for \$900 per month. (He had recently received an inheritance of approximately \$6,000 from an aunt.)			
Aug. 15-21	789 West End Ave at 99th Street, (Beck and Malina's apartment)	<i>Childish Jokes</i> (Paul Goodman) N.B. Sometimes referred to as <i>Crying Backstage</i> (Tytell, 1995: 71), (Malina, 1984: 170); <i>Ladies Voices</i> (Gertrude Stein); <i>He Who Says Yes and He Who Says No</i> (Bertolt Brecht); <i>The Dialogue of the Manikin and the Young Man</i> (Federico Garcia Lorca)	These pieces are performed here because the Cherry Lane Theatre, although leased, is still not ready for use. Set up for audiences of twenty per performance (Malina, 1984: 182).
Dec. 2	Cherry Lane Theatre	<i>Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights</i> (Gertrude Stein)	'... played to full houses during its two-week run.' (Tytell, 1995: 77)
Dec. 30	Cherry Lane Theatre	<i>Beyond the Mountains</i> (Kenneth Rexroth)	'The play was a fiasco, and even though the actors went unpaid, it lost twenty-six hundred dollars.' (Tytell, 1995: 78). Malina has severe problems with her part as Phaedra, dropping out for most of the season. Closes around January 11 1952.
1952			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Mar. 2	Cherry Lane Theatre	<i>Desire Trapped by the Tail</i> (Pablo Picasso); <i>Ladies' Voices</i> ; <i>Sweeney Agonistes</i> (T.S. Eliot)	Billed as 'An Evening of Bohemian Theatre'. Runs until June (Malina, 1984: 233).
May 25	Cherry Lane Theatre	<i>Faustina</i> (Paul Goodman)	'Wretched' reviews (Malina, 1984: 228). Season limps along until June 19, playing to poor audiences.
Aug. 5	Cherry Lane Theatre	<i>Ubu the King</i> (Alfred Jarry); <i>The Heroes</i> (John Ashbery)	Enthusiastically received by audiences
Aug. 9: 'The theater is closed!' according to Malina (1984: 240) – by new owner, Kenneth Carroad. Also stopped from operating by Fire Department after 3 performances because sets are 'hazardously inflammable'; Con Edison threatening to disconnect electricity for non-payment of accounts; Carroad may have tipped off Fire Department partly because cast members are living in the theatre space (Tytell, 1995: 86).			

1953			
Easter: Malina directs, Beck designs, members act in <i>R(oss)um's U(niversal) R(obot)s</i> , by Karel Capek at Dramatic Workshop upon Madame Piscator's invitation (Malina, 1984: 273). It is <i>de facto</i> a Living Theatre production.			
Oct.: Group rents loft as new theatre. 'In a three-storey wooden building on 100th Street and Broadway, it occupies the top storey' (Malina, 1984: 296). Neither designed nor equipped as a theatre space; no admission charge but ask for voluntary contributions (averaging 59 cents according to Beck); rent is \$90 per month according to Biner (1971: 35); the cost of conversion and setting up first production is \$136 (35).			
1954			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Mar. 18	100 th Street (100th and Broadway), NYC	<i>The Age of Anxiety</i> (W.H. Auden)	Runs until May 3. Cast of 14.
Jun. 3	100th Street	<i>The Spook Sonata</i> (August Strindberg)	Closes June 28. Small houses.
Sept. 30	100th Street	<i>Orpheus</i> (Jean Cocteau)	Small houses common, but extend slightly to close November 14.
Dec. 2	100th Street	<i>The Idiot King</i> (Charles Fredericks)	Runs to January 9, but several performances cancelled during December due to lack of attendance.
1955			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Feb. 17	100th Street	<i>Tonight We Improvise</i> (Luigi Pirandello)	Well-received, good attendances; first Living Theatre work where breaking of theatrical frame is used (albeit scripted by playwright rather than their invention); actors complain about their lines, mingle with the audience.
May 27 (Mar. 29 - Rosenthal)	100th Street	<i>Phèdre</i> (Jean Racine)	Tobi Edelman directs (a castmember in previous productions).
Oct. 12	100th Street	<i>The Young Disciple</i> (Paul Goodman)	Dismal houses
Nov. 15: Department of Buildings pre-empts early closure of run by serving notice of closure on grounds of exceeding 'carrying capacity' in loft (18 people in total allowed).			
1956			
No performances			
1957			
Jun. 27: Identify a venue on 14th Street as new location for the theatre (Malina, 1984: 438). N.B. The actual street address appears to have been either 520 Sixth Avenue (Durham, 1989: 423) or 530 Sixth Avenue (Neff, 1970: 4).			
Jul. 12 - Aug. 5: Beck and Malina arrested and jailed (30 days) for participating in annual Catholic Worker protest against State Defense Emergency Act – this both delays the establishment of the new venue and also reinforces their views on civil disobedience			
1958			
No performances. Seek funds for conversion and renovation of 14th Street venue.			

1959			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Jan. 13	14th Street	<i>Many Loves</i> (William Carlos Williams)	Well received; runs through until May.
Feb.: Poetry readings at 14th Street. Allen Ginsberg and Paul Goodman among first to read. Initiated in order to build an 'artistic community', and cultivate potential sponsors, they become a regular event, with subsequent guests such as Frank O'Hara, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Edward Dahlberg, Josephine Herbst, Charles Mingus, Eric Bentley, Maya Deren, and Joseph Campbell.			
Jun. 30	14th Street	<i>The Cave at Machpelah</i> (Paul Goodman)	Closes after 7 performances due to hostile reviews (justifiably so, according to Beck); Joseph (Joe) Chaikin, founder of the Open Theatre in 1963, is in the cast of this play.
Jul. 15	14th Street	<i>The Connection</i> (Jack Gelber)	Initially draws negative reviews but gains support relatively quickly, becoming financially and critically successful. Gelber and main actor Warren Finnerty receive Obies for this production.
Nov. 6	14th Street	<i>Tonight We Improvise</i> (Pirandello)	Well received.
1960			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Jun. 22	14th Street	<i>The Marrying Maiden</i> (Jackson MacLow); <i>Women of Trachis</i> (Sophocles/Ezra Pound)	Billed as 'The Theatre of Chance'
Dec. 20	14th Street	<i>In the Jungle of Cities</i> (Bertolt Brecht)	
1961			
Jun.: First overseas tour of European cities. Estimated cost of sending company of 33 actors and technicians on tour \$40,000; Beck solicits \$6,000 and \$17,000 comes from an art sale of donated works by notable New York artists. Itinerary: Rome, Teatro Parioli, <i>The Connection</i> ; <i>Many Loves</i> Turin, Teatro Carignano, <i>The Connection</i> Milan, Piccolo Teatro, <i>The Connection</i> ; <i>Many Loves</i> Paris, Théâtre des Nations, <i>The Connection</i> ; <i>Many Loves</i> ; <i>In the Jungle of Cities</i> Berlin, Akademie der Künste, <i>The Connection</i> ; <i>Many Loves</i> Frankfort, Schauspielhaus, <i>The Connection</i>			
Receive both the Grand Prix of the Théâtre des Nations and the Paris Theatre Critics Circle medal.			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Dec. 7	14th Street	<i>The Apple</i> (Jack Gelber)	Lukewarm reviews. Brief season.



1962			
<p>Apr./May: Second overseas tour European cities. 27 members travel from New York for this tour; funds come from donations and grant by Brandeis University. Tytell (1995: 216) claims that American railroad family heir Jerome Hill donated \$20,000 for this tour.</p> <p>Itinerary:</p> <p>Paris, Théâtre de Lutèce - <i>The Connection; The Apple; In the Jungle of Cities</i></p> <p>Zürich, Schauspielhaus - <i>The Connection</i></p> <p>Düsseldorf, Kammerspiele - <i>The Connection; In the Jungle of Cities</i></p> <p>Maastricht, Stadsschouwburg - <i>The Connection</i></p> <p>Amsterdam, Petite Comédie - <i>The Connection</i></p> <p>Rotterdam, De Lantaarn - <i>The Connection</i></p> <p>Eindhoven, Philips Memorial Theatre - <i>The Connection</i></p> <p>Scheveningen, Kurhaus Paviljoen - <i>The Connection</i></p> <p>Nijmegen, Stadsschouwburg - <i>The Connection</i></p> <p>N.B. Tytell (1995: 175) states that 22 cities in Europe are toured, although other sources list only those contained here. I have used the data from Biner (1971: 234-35).</p>			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
Sept. 18	14th Street	<i>Man is Man</i> (Bertolt Brecht)	Well-received. Total number of performances 170 according to Biner (1971: 60).
1963			
<p>Feb. 1: Seventeen actors, including Joe Chaikin, and four writers meet in the auditorium of the Living Theatre and declare themselves a distinct theatre group, soon to be known as the Open Theatre.</p>			
Date	Venue	Production	Comments
May 15	14th Street	<i>The Brig</i> (Kenneth Brown)	Lukewarm or dismissive reviews initially. Word of mouth fills houses and positive reviews appear. Brutal realism of play prompts some to demand official inquiry into Marine disciplinary practices.
<p>Oct. 18: Theatre (and assets) seized by Inland Revenue Service for non-payment of taxes. Other debts had already made closure a possibility. A lock-in protest and illegal performance are staged. A court case follows, in which Beck and Malina are handed down prison sentences. An 'Exile Productions' season of <i>The Brig</i> runs for two months at the Midway Theatre, from January until March 1964, at which point Irving Maidman, the owner, wants to charge rent and the season is cut short. This marks the end of formal New York residency for the Living Theatre for nearly three decades.</p>			

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## Appendix D: The Living Theatre in Europe 1964-68

1964				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Aug.: The company, numbering around 25 travels to Europe for several engagements, beginning in London. Rehearsals in London for <i>The Brig</i> . Company housed at unspecified locations.				
Sept. 2-26	London	Mermaid Theatre	<i>The Brig</i>	43
Season cut short prematurely by theatre owner. Group paid off and asked to leave England.				
Oct.: Rehearsals and accommodation in Paris at the American Students' Artists' Center leading to the creation of <i>Mysteries and Smaller Pieces</i> .				
Oct. 26	Paris	American Students' Artists' Center	<i>Mysteries and Smaller Pieces</i> (premiere)	1
Nov. 2,3,4,5,7	Brussels	Theatre 140	<i>The Brig</i>	5
6	Antwerp	Arenberg Schowberg	<i>The Brig</i>	1
9	Basel	Komödie Basel	<i>The Brig</i>	1
19	Berlin	Akademie der Künste	<i>The Brig</i>	1
Dec.: Residency at a 'summer camp' Heist-sur-Mer, Belgium in what is variously described as a 'farmhouse' or an 'orphanage'. The cold, harsh, living conditions (a particularly severe winter, had forced evacuation of the orphans) are alleviated by drugs, the ordeal apparently helping to unify more greatly those group members who did not leave altogether – about a third of the 25 Americans in the Living Theatre leave during or shortly after this phase. Group works on <i>The Maids</i> (Jean Genet); <i>Mysteries</i> . Judith Malina and Julian Beck return to the U.S. in mid-December to begin their 30 and 60 day jail terms for convictions relating to Inland Revenue Service violations by the Living Theatre from 1959-63.				

1965				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan.: Heist-sur-Mer residency continues. Malina and Beck rejoin in January and February respectively. From here the characteristic form of travel is a caravan of five Volkswagen 'Kombis' or 'Microbuses', carrying five people each.				
Feb. 4-13	Brussels	Theatre 140	<i>Mysteries</i>	10
15-16	Amsterdam	Theatre Carré	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
17	Rotterdam	De Lantaaren	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
Feb. 26-Mar. 12	Berlin	Forum Theater	<i>The Maids</i> (premiere)	16
Mar. 12-14	Rome	Eliseo	<i>Mysteries</i>	3
16-18	Turin	Gobbetti	<i>The Brig</i>	3
26-28	Rome	Parioli	<i>The Brig</i>	3
Apr.: Velletri, south of Rome. Initial living room discussions for what will become <i>Frankenstein</i> . Meet 10 hours a day for three weeks.				
Apr. 9-13	Rome	Teatro dei Satiri	<i>Mysteries</i>	5
14	Naples	San Ferdinando	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
15-22	Rome	Teatro dei Satiri	<i>Mysteries</i>	7
23	Trieste	Teatro Stabile	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
24	Trieste	Teatro Stabile	<i>Mysteries</i> (cancelled)	-
28-29	Firenze	Teatro di San Apollonia	<i>Mysteries</i>	4
May 1-2				
May 15-16	Naples	San Ferdinando	<i>The Brig</i>	2
Jun./Jul.: Residency in Berlin, after several weeks at various friends' abodes, housed at Spandau, a prison with only one inmate, Rudolf Hess. Produce 'Velletri poem' version of <i>Frankenstein</i> . The composition of the group of 25 is now: two-thirds American; one third European. Actors receive approximately \$1 per day to live on.				
Jun. 18-24	Berlin	Akademie der Künste	<i>Mysteries</i>	7
Jul. 6-17	Berlin	Forum	<i>The Maids</i>	13
Jul.: Continuing work on <i>Frankenstein</i> . Produce 'Munich scenario' of <i>Frankenstein</i> .				
22-25	Munich	Theater in der Leopoldstrasse	<i>The Maids</i>	4
26,28,30,31	Munich	Leopoldstrasse	<i>The Brig</i>	5
Aug. 2	Munich	Leopoldstrasse	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
3-4	Munich	Leopoldstrasse	<i>The Maids</i>	2
5	Munich	Leopoldstrasse	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
Sept. 25-27	Venice	La Perla	<i>Frankenstein</i> (premiere Sept. 26)	3
Season is cut short by police ban on Living Theatre. Asked to leave Italy and escorted to Austrian border.				
Oct. 15-17	Berlin	Akademie der Künste	<i>Frankenstein</i>	3
21	Stuttgart	Kammertheater	<i>The Maids</i>	1
22	Stuttgart	Kammertheater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
23	Bremen	Theater der Freien Hanseaten Stadt	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
25	Soest	Wilhelm Morgner Haus	<i>The Maids</i>	1
Nov. 2	Cologne	Schauspielhaus	<i>The Brig</i>	1
4	Rolandseck	Bahnhof	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
6	Rolandseck	Bahnhof	<i>The Maids</i>	1
8-9	Frankfurt	Intercont. Hotel	<i>The Maids; Mysteries</i>	4
10	Mülheim am	Stadthalle	<i>The Maids; Mysteries</i>	2

1965				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
	Rhein			
13	Bonn	Universität Hörsaal	<i>The Maids</i>	1
19	Aachen	Technische Uni. Grosser Hörsaal	<i>The Brig</i>	1
22	Bonn	Universität Hörsaal	<i>The Maids</i>	1
23	Heidelberg	Schloss: Königsaal	<i>The Maids; Mysteries</i>	2
29	Vienna	Theater an der Wien	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
30 - Dec. 2	Vienna	Theater an der Wien	<i>The Brig</i>	3
2	Vienna	Haus der Jugend	<i>Mysteries and discussion</i>	1
5	Malmö	Stadsteater (Intima)	<i>The Maids</i>	2
6	Malmö	Stadsteater (Intima)	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
7	Lund	Stora Salen, AF Universität	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
9	Göteborg	Stadsteater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
10	Göteborg	Stadsteater-Intima	<i>The Maids</i>	1
12-13	Stockholm	Marionetteteatern	<i>The Maids</i>	2
14-15	Stockholm	Marionetteteatern	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
16	Uppsala	Stadsteater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
18	Helsinki	Kansallisteatteri	<i>The Maids</i>	1
19	Helsinki	Kansallisteatteri	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
21	Stockholm	Marionetteteatern	<i>The Maids; Mysteries</i>	2
27	Copenhagen	Det Kongelige Theater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
28-29	Copenhagen	Fiol Theater	<i>The Maids</i>	2
30	Copenhagen	Det Ny Scala	<i>Mysteries</i>	1

1966				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 1	Aarhus	Aarhus Theater	<i>The Maids</i>	1
2	Aarhus	Aarhus Theater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
21-30	Bologna	Teatro Stabile al Teatre Apollo	<i>The Brig</i>	10
Feb. 2-6	Milan	Palazzo Durini	<i>Mysteries</i>	7
17	Milan	Università Politecnica	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
21	Genoa	Auditorium della Fiera del Mare	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
23	Lecco	Salone Don Rodrigo	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
24-27	Venice	Teatro del Ridotto	<i>Mysteries</i>	5
Mar. 3-6	Catania	Palazzo Biscari- Moncada	<i>Mysteries</i>	4
11	Catania	Istituto del Magistero della Uni.	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
19-20	Bari	Teatro Piccinni	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
29	Sarajevo	Nörodno Pozoniste - National Theatre	<i>The Brig</i>	1
30	Sarajevo	Mahil Scena - Experimental Theatre	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
Apr. 1	Sarajevo	Workers' Theatre	<i>The Brig</i>	1
2	Mostar	Närodno Pozoriste	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
3	Zenica	Närodno Pozoriste	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
4	Banja Luka	Hall of Culture	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
15-17	Modena	Teatro Comunale	<i>The Brig</i>	3
21	Reggio Emilia	Teatro Municipale	<i>The Brig</i>	1
22-27	Bologna	Teatro Stabile al Teatre Apollo	<i>Mysteries</i>	6
30	Ferrara	Teatro Comunale	<i>The Brig</i>	1
May: Work continues on <i>Frankenstein</i> in Reggio-Emilia, Italy.				
May 4	Parma	Teatro Comunale	<i>The Brig</i>	1
5-8	Tornio	Unione Culturale, Palazzo Carignano	<i>Mysteries</i>	4
21	Trento	Teatro Sociale	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
22	Rimini	Teatro Novelli	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
30	Milan	Palazzo Durini (Countess Borlotti)	'Free Theatre' (near-riot)	1
June. 10	Reggio- Emilia	Circolo Gramski	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
27-28	Paris	Odéon, Théâtre de France	<i>The Brig</i>	2
29-30	Paris	Odéon, Théâtre de France	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
Jul.: Further work on <i>Frankenstein</i> in Reggio-Emilia, Italy.				
Jul. 29, Aug. 2	Cassis	Festival de Cassis (Grand Théâtre)	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
Aug. 4	Cassis	Festival de Cassis (Grand Théâtre)	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
5	Cassis	Festival de Cassis	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1

1966				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
		(Grand Théâtre)		
Aug.: Further work on <i>Frankenstein</i> in Cassis. 'Cassis version' of <i>Frankenstein</i> produced. Living quarters unfinished and intended for migrant workers.				
Sept./Oct.: Working on <i>Antigone</i> at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Also, the 'Berlin version' of <i>Frankenstein</i> . Confrontation with members of a German radical theatre group called the 'Frei Volksbühne', who have summarily dismantled the set of <i>Frankenstein</i> .				
Sept. 1-10	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>The Brig</i>	10
28-30	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>Frankenstein</i>	3
Oct. 1-2	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
7-8	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>The Maids</i>	2
8-9	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
10	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>The Maids</i>	1
11	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
12-13	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
14-15	Berlin	Akad. der Künste	<i>The Maids</i>	2
Oct.: Rehearsals for <i>Antigone</i> at Teatro del Ridotto. Unheated rehearsal space.				
23-25	Venice	Teatro del Ridotto	<i>The Maids</i>	3
26-31	Venice	Teatro del Ridotto	<i>Mysteries</i>	6
Nov. 1	Trente	Università Sociologica	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
3-5	Turin	Union Culturale, Palazzo Carignano	<i>The Maids</i>	4
9-12	Brussels	Théâtre 140	<i>Frankenstein</i>	4
15-17	Amsterdam	Sigma Centrum	<i>The Maids</i>	3
19	Enschede	De Twentse Schouwburg	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
21-22	Amsterdam	Sigma Centrum	<i>The Maids</i>	2
23	Rotterdam	De Rotterdam Stadsschouwburg	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
24-25	Amsterdam	Sigma Centrum	<i>The Maids</i>	2
26-29	Amsterdam	Sigma Centrum	<i>Frankenstein</i>	4
Dec. 1-4	Brussels	Théâtre 140	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
7-8	Amsterdam	Théâtre Carré	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
10	Nijmegen	Stadsschouwburg	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
11	Esslingen	Stadttheater Württ, Landesbühne	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
12	Laren	Singer Memorial Concertzaal	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
14	Utrecht	Stadsschouwburg	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
16-17	Haarlem	Stadsschouwburg	<i>The Brig</i>	2
19	Tilburg	Stadsschouwburg	<i>The Brig</i>	1
20	Eindhoven	Stadsschouwburg	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
22	Maastricht	Stadsschouwburg	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
24-29	Amsterdam	Sigma Centrum	<i>Mysteries</i>	5
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1967				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 1-2	Braunschweig	Staatstheater, Kleines Haus	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
2-3	Hannover	Humboldtschule-Landestheater	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
5	Wesel	Städtliche Bühne	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
7-8	Munich	Theater in der Brenner Strasse	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
9-13	Munich	Theater in der Brenner Strasse	<i>Mysteries</i>	5
15	Heidelberg	Städtliche Bühne	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
18	Frankfort	Cantatesaal Theater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
20	Mannheim	National Theater, Kleines Haus	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
21	Frankfort	Cantatesaal Theater	<i>The Maids;</i> <i>Mysteries</i>	1
22	Frankfort	Cantatesaal Theater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
23	Bern	Alhambra-Saal	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
30 - Feb. 3	Frankfort	Theater an Turm	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
6	Hamburg	Auditorium Maximum	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
7	Hamburg	Auditorium Maximum	<i>The Maids;</i> <i>Mysteries</i>	1
8	Hamburg	Auditorium Maximum	<i>The Brig</i>	1
18-19	Krefeld	Stadttheater	<i>Antigone</i> (Premiere)	2
21	Mönchen- Gladbach	Stadttheater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
23	Oberhausen	Städtische Bühne	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
24	Dinslaken	Festhalle des Gymnasium	<i>Antigone</i>	1
25	Krefeld	Stadttheater	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
26	Bad Godesberg	Stadthalle	<i>Antigone</i>	1
Mar. 1	Cologne- Mühlheim	Stadthalle	<i>Antigone</i>	1
3-4	Hamburg	Theater am Besenbindorf	<i>The Brig</i>	2
5	Kiel	Stadttheater	<i>Antigone</i>	1
7-9	Geneva	Théâtre de Carouge	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
8-10	Geneva	Théâtre de Carouge	<i>Antigone</i>	1
11	Geneva	Théâtre de Carouge	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
13-16	Turin	Union Culturale; (Piper Club)	<i>Antigone</i> (3); <i>Mysteries</i>	4
19	Parma	Teatro Regio	<i>Antigone</i>	1
27	Perugia	Teatro Morlacchi	<i>World Action</i>	1
28	Perugia	Teatro Morlacchi	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
29	Perugia	Teatro Morlacchi	<i>Antigone</i>	1
Apr. 3	L'Aquila	Teatro Comunale	<i>Antigone</i>	1
5-9	Rome	Teatro Delle Arti	<i>Antigone</i> (3); <i>The Maids</i> (2)	5
11-12	Genoa	Teatro Stabile	<i>Antigone</i>	2
13-14	Genoa	Teatro Stabile	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
15	Genoa	Teatro Stabile	<i>The Maids</i>	1
17- May 1	Milan	Palazzo Durini	<i>Antigone</i> (9); <i>The</i> <i>Maids</i> (8)	17
2	Modena	Teatro Comunale	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
4	Carpi	Teatro Comunale	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
5-7	Turin	Teatro Alfieri	<i>Frankenstein</i>	3

1967				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
9	Prato	Teatro Metastasio	<i>Antigone</i>	1
10-13	Rome	Teatro Parioli	<i>Mysteries</i> (3); <i>Antigone</i> (3)	6
14	Rome	Teatro Parioli	<i>Antigone</i> ; <i>The Maids</i>	2
16	Reggio-Emilia	Teatro Municipale	<i>Antigone</i>	1
17	Ferrara	Teatro Comunale	<i>Antigone</i>	1
20	Bari	Teatro Piccinni	<i>Antigone</i>	1
21	Bari	Teatro Piccinni	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
23	Naples	Teatro Politeama	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
24	Naples	Teatro Politeama	<i>Antigone</i>	1
27	Salerno	Teatro Augusteo	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
29	Leghorn	Casa della Cultura	<i>Antigone</i>	1
30	Florence	Teatro Andrea del Sarto	<i>Antigone</i>	1
31	Sienna	Teatro Rinovata	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
Jun. 6	Caen	Maison de la Culture	<i>The Brig</i>	1
7	Caen	Maison de la Culture	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
8-9	Caen	Maison de la Culture	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
10	Caen	Maison de la Culture	<i>The Maids</i>	1
Aug. 3-5	Paris	Studio 102, ORTF	<i>Mysteries</i>	3
Sept. 6-22	Paris	Théâtre Alpha 347	<i>Mysteries</i>	18
24-25	Belgrade	Atelier 212	<i>Antigone</i>	3
Oct.: Work on <i>Frankenstein</i> . Procude 'Dublin version'.				
Oct. 3-5	Dublin	Olympia Theatre	<i>Frankenstein</i>	3
6-8	Dublin	Olympia Theatre	<i>Antigone</i>	3
13-22	Brussels	Théâtre 140	<i>Antigone</i>	9
23-24	Liège	Palais de Congrès	<i>Antigone</i>	2
26	Seraing	Centre Cultural Communal	<i>Antigone</i>	2
Nov. 3-5	Barcelona	Teatre Romea	<i>Antigone</i>	4
7	Valladolid	Teatro Carrion	<i>Antigone</i>	1
8	Bilbao	Teatre Campos Eliseos	<i>Antigone</i>	1
9	San Sebastian	Teatro Victoria Eugenia	<i>Antigone</i>	1
13	Bordeaux	Théâtre Francais	<i>Antigone</i>	1
17	Bordeaux	Théâtre Francais	<i>All' Italia</i>	1
18	Bordeaux	Théâtre Francais	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
20	Bordeaux	Théâtre Alhambra	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
23-26	Paris	Théâtre Alpha 347	<i>Antigone</i>	4
27	Nanterre	Faculté des Lettres	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
28- Dec. 3	Paris	Théâtre Alpha 347	<i>Antigone</i>	6
4	Paris	Faculté de Droit	<i>Antigone</i>	1
5-31	Paris	Théâtre Alpha 347	<i>Antigone</i>	24
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1968				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 6	Geneva	Grand Théâtre	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
9	Lausanne	Théâtre Municipal	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
10	Lausanne	Théâtre Municipal	<i>Antigone</i>	1
11	Bern	Stadtheater	<i>Antigone</i>	1
15	Lucerne	Stadtheater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
16	Zürich	Theater im Volkshaus	<i>Antigone</i>	1
17	Zürich	Theater im Volkshaus	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
18	Zürich	Theater im Volkshaus	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
19	Zürich	Theater im Volkshaus	<i>Antigone</i>	1
20	Geneva	Théâtre de la Comédie	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
21-22	Geneva	Théâtre de la Comédie	<i>Antigone</i>	2
25	Zürich	Theater im Volkshaus	<i>Antigone</i>	1
26	Zürich	Theater im Volkshaus	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
Jan. 31 - Feb. 9: Initial discussions in Rome about <i>Paradise Now</i> .				
Feb. 19 - Apr.: Rehearsals at Villagio Magico (Club Med.), Cefalù, Sicily on <i>Paradise Now</i>				
May 2-3	Palermo	Teatro Mobile Popolare	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
10	Bourges	Maison de la Culture	<i>Antigone</i>	1
11	Tours	Palais des Sports	<i>Antigone</i>	1
May 16: Living Theatre members in the vanguard of student occupation of the Odéon Théâtre de France.				
May 21- Jul. 24: More work on <i>Paradise Now</i> at Vielle Ecole Frederick Mistral, Avignon. Premiere to take place at the annual Theatre Festival of Avignon. The group is forced to share the old high school accommodation with some 100 <i>enragés</i> (radical students).				
Jul. 20	Avignon	Cloître des Carmes	<i>Antigone</i>	1
22-23	Avignon	Cloître des Carmes	<i>Paradise Now</i>	2 previews
24	Avignon	Cloître des Carmes	<i>Paradise Now</i> (premiere)	1
25-26	Avignon	Cloître des Carmes	<i>Paradise Now</i>	2
Jul. 28: The 'Avignon Statement' is issued by the Living Theatre concerning the decision to withdraw from the Avignon Festival.				
Aug. 1	Ollioulles	Chateauvallon	<i>Paradise Now</i> (free performance)	1
20-24	Geneva	Pavillon des Sports	<i>Paradise Now</i>	5
Aug. 31: The Living Theatre sails from Le Havre for the United States aboard an Italian cruise ship, the M.S. <i>Aurelia</i> . The ensemble at this time comprises 34 adults and nine children. The cruise ship is carrying a number of American students on their return journey from a summer abroad. The group performs <i>Mysteries</i> in exchange for a fare reduction, which is well received all round.				
Sept. 3	M.S. <i>Aurelia</i>	Riviera Lounge	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
				[558]

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## Appendix E: Living Theatre U.S. Tour September 1968 – March 1969

1968				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Sept. 9: The group arrives in New York. Members spend the first few days there trying to readjust and confirming tour details, which have only been vaguely mapped out by the Radical Theatre Repertory booking agency, run by Saul Gottlieb, Mel Howard and Oda Sturges.				
Sept. 16-18	New Haven, Conn.	Yale University Theatre	<i>Mysteries</i>	4 (Sold out)
Group morale is not high, members are already bored or weary (Neff, 1970: 31).				
19-20	New Haven, Conn.	Yale University Theatre	<i>Antigone</i>	2
21	New Haven, Conn.	Yale University Theatre	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
23-25	New Haven, Conn.	Yale University Theatre	<i>Frankenstein</i>	3
26-28	New Haven, Conn.	Yale University Theatre	<i>Paradise Now</i> (U.S. premiere)	3 (Sold out)
There are five arrests as actors and audience go into the street at the end of the first show. The second show is marked by backstage challenges from SDS and other groups. During the two weeks in New Haven there are meetings with radical and neighborhood groups, including a Black Panther group, partly out of active interest, and partly because some of these groups have demanded that the Living Theatre listen to their experiences.				
Oct. 2-7	New York City	Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)	<i>Frankenstein</i>	6
9-20	New York City	BAM	<i>Mysteries</i>	5
10-19	New York City	BAM	<i>Antigone</i>	5
14-21	New York City	BAM	<i>Paradise Now</i>	6
22	New York City	Fillmore East	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (1st rung)
The New York City season is marked by good houses, mixed reviews, backstage groupies, and a general sense of being well received.				
28	Stony Brook, L.I.	Gymnasium, New York University	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
29	Stony Brook, L.I.	Gymnasium, NYU	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
31-Nov. 1	Cambridge, Mass.	Kresge Auditorium (MIT)	<i>Frankenstein</i>	2
Nov. 2	Cambridge, Mass.	Kresge Auditorium (MIT)	<i>Antigone</i>	1
3	Cambridge, Mass.	Kresge Auditorium (MIT)	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
5	Cambridge, Mass.	Kresge Auditorium (MIT)	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (Police raid)
Group spends ten days (till Nov. 8) in Boston. The shows are sold out, but reviews are negative (Tytell, 1995: 247). The group is chided for not joining in protest over a student being unfairly disciplined. Two shows at MIT are cancelled (Neff, 1970: 96-99).				
8	Providence, R.I.	Brown University	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
12	Plainfield, Vt.	Goddard College	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
14	Pittsburgh, Pa.	Skibo Hall, Carnegie Mellon University	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
15	Pittsburgh, Pa.	Skibo Hall, Carnegie Mellon University	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
18	New Brunswick, N.J.	Rutgers University	<i>Rite of Guerilla Theatre</i>	1 (lecture-demo)
20	Castleton, Vt.	Gymnasium, Castleton College	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (1500 in audience)
The audience is very suspicious and hard to engage. A female audience member is slapped by one of the group, causing internal arguments (Neff, 1970: 111).				
21	Bennington, Vt.	Gymnasium, Bennington College	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
The audience is already liberated or at least tolerant. The Bennington 'love commune' disrobes and goes on stage (Tytell, 1995: 248).				

1968				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
22	Northampton, Mass.	Smith College	<i>Rite of Guerilla Theatre</i>	1 (lecture-demo)
24	Philadelphia, Pa.	Fleischer Auditorium (Y.M.H.A.)	<i>Antigone</i>	1
25	Philadelphia, Pa.	Fleischer Auditorium	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
26	Philadelphia, Pa.	Fleischer Auditorium	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (1500 in audience)
There are minor arrests. Beck receives a small fine (Tytell, 1995: 250).				
27	Philadelphia, Pa.	Temple University, Tomlinson Theater	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
30	Princeton, N.J.	Princeton University, McCarter Theater	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
Dec. 1	Great Neck, N.Y.	Beth-El Auditorium	<i>Antigone</i>	1
2	Scranton, Pa.	University of Scranton	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
At least nine members are now stricken with influenza. Luke Theodore and Pierre Denis want to leave. Jenny Hecht has already departed (Tytell, 1995: 250).				
4	Granville, Ohio	Denison University	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
The audience is surly at Granville. The group feels intimidated (Neff, 1970: 97).				
6	Cincinnati, Ohio	Playhouse in the Park	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
7	Cincinnati, Ohio	Playhouse in the Park	<i>Mysteries; Antigone</i>	2
10	Ann Arbor, Mich.	Michigan Union Ballroom	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
11	Ann Arbor, Mich.	Michigan Union Ballroom	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
The show on the 11th is the best <i>Paradise Now</i> of the tour according to Neff (119).				
12	Detroit, Mich.	Detroit Art Institute	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
13	Detroit, Mich.	Detroit Art Institute	<i>Antigone</i>	1
14	Detroit, Mich.	Detroit Art Institute	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
16	Ithaca, N.Y.	Bailey Hall, Cornell University	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
17	Rochester, N.Y.	Strong Auditorium, Rochester University	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
18	Ithaca, N.Y.	Bailey Hall, Cornell University	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
21	Roxbury, Mass.	Crown Manor (food hall)	<i>Antigone</i>	1
22	Roxbury, Mass.	Crown Manor	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
The show of the 22nd is good. Even the police who are present enjoy it				
24-26	Bronx	Poe Forum	<i>Frankenstein</i>	3
27-30	Bronx	Poe Forum	<i>Mysteries (2); Antigone</i>	3
29	Bronx	Poe Forum	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
The group plays at a dilapidated movie house in the Bronx because of the refusal on principle (effectively by Beck) to accept Broadway offers. The shows pass without notice (Neff, 1970: 121). One member, Carol Berger, is diagnosed with cancer and is operated upon immediately – other members donate blood. There are arguments internally about the degree of aggression in the tone and manner of some members during <i>Paradise Now</i> (Tytell, 1995: 252).				

1969				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 1	Bronx	Poe Forum	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
2	New York City	Hunter College Concert Hall	<i>Antigone; Mysteries</i>	2
4	New York City	Hunter College Concert	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
7-11	Chicago, Ill.	Mandel Hall, University of Chicago	<i>Antigone</i> (1); <i>Mysteries</i> (2); <i>Frankenstein</i> (2)	5
12	Chicago, Ill.	Mandel Hall	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
The Chicago season is approached with major trepidation by the group in the wake of the Chicago Convention riots of the previous summer. However, apart from critical rejection the shows proceed moderately well, the performances are interesting, and the group takes time to research local developments beforehand by talking to local groups. It is the only city where older audience members stay through <i>Paradise Now</i> , which has been shorn of 30 minutes. <i>Paradise Now</i> is better prepared and structured from here onwards (Neff, 1970: 130).				
15	Madison, Wi.	Meeting House, First Unitarian Church	<i>Antigone</i>	1
16	Madison, Wi.	Meeting House	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
The group has to switch to the above venue in Madison because the University withdraws its offer of a venue on campus. The group learns that there is no money available to pay wages as RTR, the booking agency for the U.S. tour, is having difficulty releasing funds (Tytell, 1995: 253).				
17-18	Appleton, Wi.	Lawrence Memorial Chapel	<i>Mysteries; Frankenstein</i>	2
22	Iowa City, Iowa	Iowa Memorial Union	<i>Antigone; Mysteries</i>	2
24	Chicago, Ill.	The Auditorium Theatre	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (3000 in audience)
28-31	Kansas City, Kan.	Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall	<i>Antigone; Mysteries</i>	2
31	Kansas City, Kan.	Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
Feb. 2	Hays, Kan.	Sheridan Coliseum	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
4	Fort Collins, Colo.	Center Theatre	<i>Antigone</i>	1
5	Boulder, Colo.	University of Colorado, Macky Auditorium	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
6	Boulder, Colo.	University of Colorado UMC Ballroom	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
The western segment of tour is relatively uneventful, but by now nearly all members have influenza.				
11-13	Portland, Or.	Reed College, Sports Center	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
14	Portland, Or.	Reed College, Sports Center	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
15	Portland, Or.	Reed College, The Commons	<i>Antigone</i>	1
16	Ashland, Or.	University of Southern Oregon	<i>Antigone</i>	1
There is more disquieting news about RTR and finances; one of the partners has apparently stabbed the other. There are angry debates about whether or not to accept an offer by the American National Theatre Academy for a three-week season in New York, which would effectively close the tour on Broadway. Rufus Collins and others are <i>pro</i> , while Beck and a larger group <i>contra</i> , again on principle (Neff, 1970: 143; Tytell, 1995: 254).				
18-19	Berkeley, Ca.	Berkeley Community Theatre	<i>Mysteries; Frankenstein</i>	2 (350 in audience for <i>Mysteries</i> ;

1969				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
				600 for <i>Frankenstein</i> )
20	Berkeley, Ca.	Berkeley Community Theatre	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (a few hundred in audience – <i>de facto</i> a boycott)
<p>The group arrives in Northern California as rainstorms cause severe flooding and landslides up and down the Californian coast. There are violent altercations on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley on afternoon of 20th between police and students over threatened dismissal of Herbert Marcuse from Berkeley. The Berkeley performance of <i>Paradise Now</i> is reduced to a farce, getting only as far as fifth rung by midnight (riot curfew). The audience more or less takes over in direct challenge to the Living Theatre when it pays lip service to the violent 'theatre of the streets' in Berkeley that day. Only three members of the Living Theatre had been present (none of whom wanted to perform in <i>Paradise Now</i> again). Living Theatre is seen as copping out. The Living Theatre's bank accounts are frozen by the IRS, which is still seeking unpaid taxes dating to 1963. There is a scuffle between staff and members of group over the motel bill (Neff, 1970: 166; Tytell, 1995: 254).</p>				
24-27	Los Angeles, Ca.	Bovard Auditorium, Uni. Southern. Ca.	<i>The Rite of Guerilla Theatre</i> (lecture-demo); <i>Mysteries</i> ; <i>Frankenstein</i> (2); <i>Antigone</i>	5
28	Los Angeles, Ca.	Bovard Auditorium	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
Mar. 4	San Francisco, Ca.	Straight Theatre, Haight-Ashbury	'The Rite of Opposite Forces' from <i>Paradise Now</i>	Free show – a few hundred of the 'spaced out' in audience (Neff, 1970: 191)
5	San Francisco, Ca.	Nourse Auditorium	<i>Antigone</i>	1
6	San Francisco, Ca.	Nourse Auditorium	<i>Frankenstein</i>	1
7	San Francisco, Ca.	Nourse Auditorium	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
8	Oakland, Ca.	Mills College	<i>The Rite of Guerilla Theatre</i>	1 lecture-demo
8	San Francisco	Straight Theatre, Haight-Ashbury	'The Brig Dollar' from <i>Mysteries</i>	Free show – audience takes over (Neff, 1970: 193)
<p>The second San Francisco engagement is also problematic. The group relies on charity from the 'hip community' for food and shelter. The Living Theatre is initially barred from its pre-booked engagement at the Nourse Auditorium and is offered and accepts the Straight Theatre on Haight Street. The proviso with the Straight is that <i>Antigone</i> and <i>Frankenstein</i> are wanted but not <i>Paradise Now</i>. When Nourse Auditorium is re-offered, the group declines the Straight, but offers some free performances by way of compromise. One of these, scheduled for a Sunday afternoon, is missed because the group turns up late and a big rock concert is taking place nearby (Neff, 1970: 192). Still no money coming through from RTR. Jim Morrison, lead singer of LA rock group, The Doors, and an enthusiastic attendee at LA and San Francisco performances, meets with Living Theatre and gives them \$2,500 to return to East Coast. They set out by road on March 11 with no shows booked during the return leg (Neff, 1970, 219) (Tytell, 1995: 256-57).</p>				
19-20	Boston, Mass.	The Ark	<i>Mysteries</i> ; <i>Antigone</i>	2
21	New York City	Friends Meeting House,	'Guerilla	1

1969				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
		Gramercy Square 'Theatre of Ideas' (a regular forum)	Theatre' piece	
The theme for this particular forum, organised by Shirley Broughton, is 'Theatre or Therapy'. On the panel are Robert Brustein, Paul Goodman, Richard Schechner, and Malina and Beck. The night quickly descends into a harangue by Living Theatre members in the audience of 500 (Tytell, 1995: 257-58).				
22-24, 26	New York City	Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)	<i>Paradise Now</i>	3
27	New York City	BAM	<i>Antigone</i>	1
27-29	New York City	Opera House	<i>Frankenstein</i>	3
29	New York City	Brooklyn College	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
The New York season is well attended, producing some real financial reward in what is otherwise an unprofitable six-month tour. Critics continue to argue, but most find little of merit in the Living Theatre's repertoire. In total there are more than 135 performances of the various works. On April 1 1969, with the American tour completed, 14 members of the group return to Europe for a six-week tour of France.				

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## Appendix F: Living Theatre in Europe 1969-70

1969				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Apr. 16	Chambéry	Théâtre Charles Dullin	<i>Mysteries</i>	1 – pelted with eggs (Tytell, 1995: 263)
18	Dijon	Grand Théâtre	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
25-27	Lille	Théâtre Municipal	<i>Mysteries</i>	3
29-31	Mulhouse	Salle Rallye Drouot	<i>Mysteries</i> ; <i>Antigone</i>	2
May 1	Mulhouse	Salle Rallye Drouot	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (free)
6	St. Hilaire du Touvet	Théâtre du Sanitorium	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
7-10	Grenoble	Maison de la Culture	<i>Mysteries</i> (2); <i>Antigone</i> (2)	4
10	St. Martin d'Hères	Terrasse de la Bibliothèque etc., U. Grenoble	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (free)
12	Albi	Théâtre Municipal	<i>Antigone</i>	1
13-25	Toulouse	Théâtre Daniel Sorano	<i>Mysteries</i> (6); <i>Antigone</i> (6)	12
25	Toulouse	Cité Universitaire garden	<i>For Toulouse</i>	1 (free)
Group experience harassment on and off stage in Toulouse (Tytell, 1995: 264).				
28	Lyon	Théâtre du 8	<i>Antigone</i>	1
29-30	St. Etienne	Comédie de St. Etienne, Salle Jean Dasté (Salle de Mutilés)	<i>Mysteries</i> ;	1
31	St. Etienne	Comédie de St. Etienne, Salle Jean Dasté	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 – stage invaded by pro-armed struggle youths
Jun. 4-26	London	The Roundhouse	<i>Frankenstein</i> (8); <i>Mysteries</i> (4); <i>Antigone</i> (3)	15
9-10, 20-21	London	The Roundhouse	<i>Paradise Now</i>	4
27-28	London	The Roundhouse	<i>Paradise Now</i>	2
Poor accommodation, hostile reviews, but good houses (Tytell, 1995: 265).				
Aug. 31	Essaouira, Morocco		Excerpts from <i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (free)
The group spends nearly two months in Essaouira, Morocco, their stay being cut short by police eviction. The purpose, ostensibly, is to create new work, tentatively entitled 'Saturation City', but little progress is made beyond discussion. Their lifestyles create unrest amongst locals and officials. Rufus Collins talking of leaving to go to India, and Petra Vogt suffers a break-down (Tytell, 1995: 268-69). During the boat voyage from Morocco to Italy the first real signs of the break-up of the Living Theatre appear (Perkins, 1982: 220; Tytell, 1995: 270).				
Sept. 27-30	Taormina	Teatro Greco-romano	<i>Antigone</i> (3); <i>Mysteries</i>	4
Oct. 2	Caltanissetta	Supercinema	<i>Antigone</i>	1
10-16	Venice	Teatro del Ridotto	<i>Antigone</i> (5); <i>Mysteries</i> (2)	7
18	Brescia	Teatro Comunale Santa Chiara	<i>Antigone</i>	1
20	Turin	Teatro Alfieri	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
21	Turin	Unione Culturale, Palazzo	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1

1969				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
		Carignano		
23-24	Brescia	Teatro Comunale Santa Chiara	<i>Mysteries</i>	2
25-30	Milan	Circo Medini	<i>Mysteries</i> (3); <i>Antigone</i> (2)	5
31	Milan	Circo Medini	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
Nov. 2	Milan	Università Politecnica	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
6	Ferrara	Teatro Comunale	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
7-12	Bologna	Teatro La Ribalta	<i>Antigone</i>	6
10	Capri	Teatro Comunale	<i>Antigone</i>	1
11	Bologna	Aula Magna dell' Università	<i>The Rite of Guerilla Theatre</i>	1 (free)
12	Reggio Emilia	Teatro Comunale	<i>Antigone</i>	1
14-16	Prato	Teatro Metastasio	<i>Paradise Now</i>	3
17	Florence	Circolo Space Electronic	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
18	Florence	Circolo Space Electronic	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
20	Urbino	Supercinema Ducale	<i>Antigone</i>	1
21	Urbino	Teatro Sanzio (Cellar)	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
23	Pesaro	Teatro Sperimentale	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
29-30	Naples	Teatro Mediterraneo	<i>Paradise Now</i>	2
Dec. 1	Rome	Aula III, Facoltà di Legge, U. di Roma	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
Italian shows are moderately successful but group members seem lacklustre and exhausted. When group leaves Rome, expelled again from Italy by police, more plans for re-configuration of Living Theatre into 'cells' (Tytell, 1995: 271-73).				
8	Louvain	Stadsschouwburg Leuven	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
9	Louvain	Centre Culturel	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
10-13	Brussels	Theatre 140	<i>Paradise Now</i>	4
15	Seraing	Centre Culturel	<i>Mysteries</i>	1
16	Seraing	Centre Culturel	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
18-20	Brussels	Theatre 140	<i>Mysteries</i>	3
21-23	Brussels	Theatre 140	<i>Paradise Now</i>	3
31	Berlin	Akademie der Künste	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1



1970				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 2	Berlin	Akademie der Künste	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1
3-11	Berlin	Akademie der Künste	<i>Mysteries</i> (2); <i>Antigone</i> (3)	5
10	Berlin	Sportpalast	<i>Paradise Now</i>	1 (119 total)
Jan. 11: Announcement that the Living Theatre is to divide into four cells: 10-member political cell based in Paris, later the 'Croissy cell' (Beck and Malina); environmental/experimental cell based in Berlin (Steven Ben Israel and Henry Howard); and London cell (Rufus Collins) subdivided further into an Indian cell (Rufus Collins). Within six months the Croissy cell are persuaded by visiting Brazilian artists to go and work with the poor in the 'favelas' of Sao Paulo. Shortly thereafter several of the veterans from the other cells rejoin the Living Theatre bringing their numbers to 18. Most are imprisoned in July 1971 on drugs charges and are deported from Brazil in August after intense lobbying by friends in Europe and the U.S. Intending to return to Latin America, Beck and Malina go on the college workshop circuit to raise money. Decide they could and should work at home instead.				
The Living Theatre toured more or less non-stop from Sept. 2 1964 to Jan. 11 1970, some 1980 days, averaging a performance once every 2.43 days. (812 grand total)				

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### Appendix G: San Francisco Mime Troupe Chronology 1959-70

I have based this table on the chronology provided in Davis, R.G. *The San Francisco Mime Troupe: The First Ten Years* (1975) (referred to hereinafter as *Ten Years*), and other details provided by Davis in the body of the text. I have also used Grogan (1972), Edelson (1975), Perry (1985), Doyle (1997), and Coyote (1998) for cross-checking and additional data. Unless otherwise specified 'location' is within the Bay Area of San Francisco. Also note that specific park or outdoor venues are not always given, but were likely to be places such as Duboce Park, Buena Vista Park, Lafayette Park, Golden Gate Park, and the 'panhandle', a long, narrow extension of Golden Gate Park.

1951-1958				
c. 1951-55: R.G. Davis studies for a Bachelors degree in Economics at Ohio University (2 years) and later at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque (2 years). Studies dance while at Ohio and New Mexico, and at Connecticut College (6 weeks), but not for credit towards degree.				
1956: Davis studies mime under Paul Curtis at the American Mime Studio in New York. Davis quickly becomes dissatisfied with Curtis' Method-based approach to mime (Davis, 1975: 13).				
1957: Davis receives a Fulbright scholarship to study at the Etienne Decroux studio in Paris.				
Jul. 3 1958: Davis moves to San Francisco, regarding it as more agreeably European than the hard-edged commercial environment of New York (Davis, 1975: 15). Within weeks of arrival he obtains a position as Assistant Director with the Actors Workshop of San Francisco, working Jules Irving and Herbert Blau, amongst others.				
c. spring 1959: Rehearsals of the 'R.G. Davis Mime Troupe and Studio' begin, comprising moonlighting members of the Actors Workshop of San Francisco and students from Davis's private classes. These are held at a studio in Brady Street rented by Davis in the light industrial area of the inner city.				
1959				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
c. Oct.		Playhouse Beach and Hyde?	<i>Mime and Words</i> (solo)	3 unspecified mimes and a talk on mime by Davis
Oct. 29		San Francisco Art Institute	<i>Mime and Words</i>	1 Games- 3 Sets <i>plus two other works and a talk on mime</i>
Unspecified date: Davis visits New York. He sees Living Theatre's production of Jack Gelber's <i>The Connection</i> (1960).				
1960				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
May 20-22	Oregon	Pacific Arts Festival, Reed College	Assorted 'skits'	
Dec. 11- June 28 1960		Encore Theatre 430 Mason Street (at Geary).	<i>11th Hour Mime Show</i> (inc. those above)	Combined actors, dancers, and mimes. The opening pieces were 'group inventions' which varied from one performance to another. The set pieces were composed by Davis and performed by the company.
Dec. 11 1959 - Jun. 14 1962: The Encore Theatre, a basement space in North Beach/Chinatown, belonging to the Actors Workshop of San Francisco, is made available to the R.G. Davis Mime Troupe as a performance venue (Davis, 1975: 18). Up until this point the repertoire features more or less conventional mime routines such as 'Man with a Stick' and 'Bird in Flight' (Doyle, 1997: 53).				

1961				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
April 25		Encore Theatre	<i>11th Hour Mime Show; Act Without Words II</i> (Samuel Beckett)	Along with Actors Workshop staging of <i>Purgatory</i> (Yeats) and <i>Krapp's Last Tape</i> (Beckett)
Nov. 18		Encore Theatre	<i>11<sup>th</sup> Hour Mime Show; Event I</i>	1 show nightly for 9 weeks. A 'Happening' collaboration with painter Robert Hudson and others, using various parts of auditorium, improvisation, shock tactics, etc.
The above shows are influenced by the wave of Happenings at the time: theatrical events influenced as much by artists as by theatre performers, and often co-opting the audience as the performers from the very outset.				
1962				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 20		Encore Theatre	<i>The Dowry</i> (after Molière's <i>Scapin</i> and Goldoni's <i>The Servant of Two Masters</i> )	This is the first <i>commedia dell'arte</i> -influenced production.
<i>Commedia Dell'arte</i> , a form of theatre that became popular in 16th century Italy, is chosen because of its intrinsically 'working-class viewpoint' (even if it traditionally relied upon patronage by the aristocracy) (Davis, 1975: 31). Stereotyped characters, half-masks, and loosely constructed, partially improvised scenarios typified the old <i>commedia</i> style.				
June 13		San Francisco Art Museum	<i>Act Without Words II</i> (Beckett); <i>Who's Afraid</i> (Jonathan Altman)	The Beckett work is done in mime. Monochromatic set (grey, black, white) designed by Judy Collins.
May		Golden Gate Park; Washington Square Park, North Beach	<i>The Dowry</i>	Two shows in total. The first park performance by the Mime Troupe
June 13-14		Spaghetti Factory (North Beach Cabaret)	<i>The Dowry</i>	Scenario set by Davis; performers improvise as best they can; marks the removal of the Troupe from safe confines of the Actors Workshop.
There are only two outdoor performances of <i>The Dowry</i> because this is all that the Parks Commission will permit at this time. (N.B. Up until 1965 the Mime Troupe duly applied for permits and generally co-operated with city officials in their demand to vet any material intended for public performance.)				
Unspecified date: Davis visits New York and sees Living Theatre's production of Bertolt Brecht's <i>Man is Man</i> .				
Unspecified date: Richard Schechner visits San Francisco. He sees an Actors Workshop production and meets with Davis and Yuri Svendsen (an important theatrical commentator on Mime Troupe work).				
Sept. 10 1962 - Jul. 1965: A church hall in the Mission District (3450 20th at Capp Street) is rented by the Mime Troupe as a rehearsal space/venue for \$85 per month. Davis lives in a back room.				

1963				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
c. Dec. 1962/Jan. 1963		Shot in part at the Capp Street studio	Film: <i>Plastic Haircut</i>	Judy Goldhaft, future member of the Diggers is in this film. She joined the Mime Troupe during 1962.
According to Davis (Davis, 1975: 197) the final breach with the Actors Workshop takes place in January, resulting in a drastic reduction in the size of the Troupe.				
Jan. 11		San Francisco Tape Music Center, Jones Street	<i>Event II</i>	A continuation of the Happening-style of experimentation. It includes use of Chaikin's Open Theatre mirroring exercises.
May 25		Capp Street	<i>The Root</i> (Machiavelli/ Milton Savage)	
June-July		Washington Square Park, Duboce Park, Mission Dolores Park and two others	<i>The Root</i>	There are 5 outdoor performances (one at each park), marking the second summer in the parks.
Summer 1963: The name of the group is changed to 'San Francisco Mime Troupe' during the rehearsal period for <i>Ruzzante's Maneuvers</i> . The Troupe's motto 'Engagement, Commitment, and Fresh Air' was coined at this time (Davis, 1975: 18).				
Aug 15- Nov. 2		Capp Street	<i>Ruzzante's Maneuvers</i> (Milton Savage)	Premiere at San Francisco Museum of Art - a 'fiasco'; 12-14 outdoor performances
Dec. 11- 29		Capp Street	<i>Ubu King</i> (Jarry) (script adaptation by Saul Landau)	Davis directs. Bill Wiley's costumes and set influence direction. Steve Reich composes music and choreographs placement of musicians.

1964				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 25		Capp Street	<i>Mime(s) and Movie; Plastic Haircut; Act Without Words II</i>	
Feb. 27		Capp Street	<i>Event III (Coffee Break)</i>	Third in the series of 'Happenings'
April 22		Veterans Memorial Auditorium	<i>Tartuffe</i> (Molière/ Richard Sassoon)	This marks the end of the use of small indoor venues. Davis directs. Songs by Saul Landau. Performers contribute in collaborative way.
Unspecified date: Davis visits New Orleans, Mississippi, sees Free Southern Theater's version of Brecht's <i>Rifles of Senora Carrar</i> . Davis meets again with Richard Schechner, who is at this time is a co-director of FST (his actual function is more as advocate in New York). Davis believes FST is doing work more appropriate for New York City.				
c. spring 1964: 'San Francisco New School', a 'free university' co-ordinated by Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau is given use of the rented space in Capp Street church hall. The New School is a product of the Free Speech Movement, established in 1964 following protests and disciplinary actions at University of California, Berkeley. Davis, a board member of the New School, co-teaches an 'art and politics' course. The initial location for the SF New School is Presidio Hill Private School for 1-6 grades. The New School meets at night. Jim O'Connor, Doug Dowd, Stanley Weinstein, Robert Scheer, Todd Gitlin and others contribute (most of whom have New Left/SDS associations). Davis believes this to be a crucial influence on Mime Troupe politics and activities.				
May 14 – July 25		Duboce Park	<i>Chorizos</i>	8 outdoors
July 24–Mar 1965		Capp Street	<i>Tartuffe</i>	Premiered at Capp Street and then taken to parks, Civic Center, and points south, including Big Sur
Aug. 28–Sept. 1	Los Angeles	n.s.	<i>Tartuffe</i>	3 or 4
During 1964 Davis et al. negotiate unsuccessfully to buy 2400-seat Palace Theatre, opposite Washington Square, North Beach, to house both the Mime Troupe and the San Francisco New School.				

1965				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
May 7	Sausalito	Gate Theatre	<i>The Exception and the Rule</i> (Brecht)	Davis had first read the play in 1961. Mime Troupe performances are accompanied by a presentation by Robert Scheer: 'The U.S. in Vietnam, A Morality Talk'.
May 18	San Jose	San Jose State College	<i>Tartuffe</i>	1 (Luis Valdez joins)
Jun. 17	Palo Alto	Commedia Theatre	<i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i> (R.G. Davis and Saul Landau)	The first full-length self-written work by the Mime Troupe, based upon black-face and variety show skits in American music hall tradition.
Prior to its debut, <i>The Minstrel Show</i> is in rehearsal for nine months, and key script and staging inputs come from Troupe members John Broderick and Jason Marc Alexander. Saul Landau contributes the 'Nigo History Week'. Steve Reich writes the music. 'It was a paste together event', according to Davis, and is previewed several times in front of selected audiences such as CORE, SNCC, and neighbourhood inhabitants before being taken to parks and on tour.				
Jul. 1965 - Jul. 1968: Relocation of the Mime Troupe to 924 Howard Street, a downtown studio loft. By Summer 1966 the Mime Troupe shares an office next door to the practice area with the San Francisco Regional Office of Students for a Democratic Society.				
Jul. 25		Washington Square Park	<i>Candelaio</i> (Bruno/ Peter Berg)	12 Berg takes on directing with Davis advising from the sidelines. All performers contribute ideas to staging.
Aug. 7: The Parks Commission prevents a scheduled performance of <i>Candelaio</i> from taking place in Lafayette Park. Davis is arrested for 'playing in the parks without a permit'. Shortly after he introduces the performance: 'Signor, Signora, Signorini . . . Il Troupo di Mimo di San Francisco presents for your enjoyment this afternoon . . . AN ARREST!!!' (Davis, 1975: 67). Until this point the Mime Troupe had complied with the vetting procedure of the Parks Commission, but Davis and others now judge the level of censorship unacceptable.				
Oct. 14	Palo Alto	Commedia Theatre	<i>Chronicles of Hell</i> (Ghelderode)	The show works better visually than through the text.
Nov. 1: Davis is found guilty of Aug. 7 charge of performing without permit and sentenced to one year's probation and a 60-day suspended sentence. Despite the verdict the Mime Troupe is not prohibited from performing in city parks.				
c. Nov. : Luis Valdez forms El Teatro Campesino				
Nov. 6: 'Appeal I', a 'rock dance benefit' at 924 Howard Street. It is organised by erstwhile Mime Troupe business manager Bill Graham (who subsequently becomes a rock concert entrepreneur and millionaire) to cover Troupe legal expenses. The Fugs and Jefferson Airplane appear, amongst others, the latter partly because they use the Howard Street loft for rehearsals. The event is very successful financially (1000 plus attendees and over \$2,000 take) and brings more members to the Mime Troupe.				
Dec. 10: 'Appeal II' at the Fillmore Auditorium. Similar to 'Appeal I', but on a much bigger scale.				

1966				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 5-22		Encore Theatre	<i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i> alternating with <i>Mime</i> (Davis), <i>Dance</i> (Lapiner), <i>Sound</i> (Oliveros)	See panel below
Jan. 14: 'Appeal III' at Fillmore Auditorium.				
Jan. 26-Feb. 6		Encore Theatre	<i>Act Without Words II</i> (Beckett); <i>Exception and the Rule</i>	Brecht's play is performed on a set resembling a boxing ring
Jan. 21-23: 'Trips Festival – Dance' at the Longshoremen's Hall. Mime Troupe members are involved as part of Ken Kesey/Merry Prankster Acid Test events, featuring the Grateful Dead and other rock bands.				
Feb.		924 Howard Street	<i>What's that a Head?</i> (Barbara LaMorticello)	
Apr.	North- West -Olympia, Seattle, Bellingham	(colleges mainly)	<i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i>	8 shows in 8 days
Apr. 16		924 Howard Street	Trips Festival: <i>Jack Off!</i> (Judy Goldhaft); Film: <i>Mirage</i> (Peter Weiss) and <i>Centerman</i> (Borchert/ Peter Berg)	<i>Centerman</i> is an adaptation of Wolfgang Borchert's short story 'The Dandelion.' The overall event is a parody of Ken Kesey's Bay Area (LSD) 'Trips Festivals' which had been taking place recently.
May 10 (Doyle 84) (N.B. Davis, 1975 204 has this as May 31): 'Artist's Protective Association' inaugural meeting at Howard Street loft. (It becomes the 'Artists Liberation Front' after a June 13 meeting.) Approximately 85 people attend, including many Mime Troupe members. It is prompted by the Mime Troupe's exclusion from the city arts funding decision-making process in April and an explicit rejection of a Mime Troupe funding bid. Doyle notes that four meetings took place between this date and June 13. One initiative is a 'Haight-Ashbury Settlement House' (Doyle 85).				
Jun. 5		924 Howard Street	<i>Olive Pits</i> (de Rueda/ Peter Cohon, Peter Berg et al.)	
June 19: A 'Teach-On LSD Benefit' in the Colonial Room of the Saint Francis Hotel. Part of a fund-raising promotional event for Timothy Leary, the event includes rock bands such as Big Brother and the Holding Company, Sopwith Camel. Speakers include Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure. The Mime Troupe performs <i>Search and Seizure</i> , written by Peter Berg.				
Jul. 2-Sept.		Premieres in an 'empty lot' at the corner of Laguna and California), and then in parks: Washington Square; Golden Gate; Mission Dolores; Duboce; Aquatic; and other parks in Berkeley	<i>The Miser</i> (Molière/ Frank Bardacke)	19 outdoors
Jul. 17: Artists Liberation Front benefit at the Fillmore Auditorium (includes a Mime Troupe rock band).				



1966				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
c. Aug. 1: The San Francisco Diggers form from within ranks of the Mime Troupe. N.B. This significant subgroup development is charted in a separate Appendix (See Appendix H: San Francisco Diggers Chronology 1966-1968).				
Sept. 7-Oct.	Mid West	Denver (rented hall Young Democrats-linked), Fort Collins (Colorado State University), Madison, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York (Town Hall)	<i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i>	Peter Coyote runs the tour.
Sept. 8: Mime Troupe members are arrested for 'simulated acts of perversion' and 'obscenity' on the second night in Denver.				
Oct. 8, 9, 15, 16: ALF free 'community arts fairs' at Mission, Haight-Ashbury, Hunter's Point, Tenderloin locations. Mime Troupe performs at some of these events.				
Mid-Dec.: 'Gargoyle Carolers', a Christmas Carol-singing Troupe offshoot, targets Christmas shopping areas. Carolers are arrested for begging on Dec. 16th.				



1967				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan. 7-Feb.		Geary (Shriners') Temple, Geary Street	<i>The Condemned (of Altona)</i> , Jean Paul Sartre	
Mar. 9		Geary Temple	<i>The Vaudeville Show</i> (a miscellany of sketches, incl. <i>Bodies</i> [Jane Lapiner])	
<i>The Vaudeville Show</i> is staged by Mime Troupe members not involved in touring <i>The Minstrel Show</i> . Doyle (1997: 271n) notes that on the view of Jane Lapiner, a principal Mime Troupe choreographer, this is the first fine arts dance piece to be presented by nude dancers in the United States.				
Mar.	East/Canada	Buffalo, NY; Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, Can.	<i>The Minstrel Show or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel</i>	
Mar. 14: Mime Troupe members are arrested in Calgary for possession of cannabis. Charges are subsequently dropped.				
Mar. 25: 'Appeal Party and Bail Benefit' at Geary Temple				
Apr. 12: 'Appeal IV' at the Fillmore Auditorium. Jefferson Airplane, Moby Grape, Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service and others perform, netting some \$6,000 for the Troupe's legal fighting fund.				
May 1: A letter is sent out by Davis to Mime Troupe members, reducing the size of the troupe from 59 to 14: 'Dear ..., I am cutting the company down to manageable size. This is an arbitrary move which has some specific motives. If you want to hear them, please let me know, but I have decided to cut back to those people who are now performing and working in this company or who will be performing in the immediate future. To thank you is to negate much sweat and love, but I thank <i>you</i> not only for myself but us, those and the rest, who have benefitted from what we have done together... Ronny.' (Davis, 1975: 81)				
May 12		Washington Square, Golden Gate, Mission Dolores, Duboce, Aquatic, and other parks (Berkeley)	<i>L'Amant Militaire</i> (Goldoni/ translated by Betty Schwimmer and adapted by Joan Holden)	46 The adapted text requires further work, which is done in rehearsal by Davis and Sandy Archer, according to Davis.
Jun. 16	Delano		<i>Olive Pits</i> (second version)	The Troupe is invited by Luis Valdez to perform in a United Farm Workers event. The Mime Troupe performs in Spanish and English.
Oct.10-Dec. 6: 'National' tour of the Mid West, and East Coast, presenting <i>L'Amant Militaire</i> and/or <i>Olive Pits</i> : Minneapolis (Firehouse Theatre); Madison (U. of Wisconsin); University of Iowa, DOW Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa; Pittsburgh (Carnegie Tech.), Central Park, NYC; Harvard, Mass.; MIT, Mass.; Boston U.; Brandeis; Bennington, Vt.; Goddard, Vt.; Yale, New Haven, Conn.; Film Makers Cinematique, Wooster St. NYC.				
The tour nets \$10,000 according to Davis. Richard Schechner brings Jerzy Grotowski to see the Mime Troupe's New York performance. The latter is unimpressed by the show. The Mime Troupe is similarly unimpressed by Grotowski. While in New York Davis seeks to establish a radical theatre booking agency. This leads to the 'Radical Theatre Repertory' (RTR), run by Saul Gottlieb, Mel Howard, and Beverly Landau.				
N.B. The Mime Troupe is invited to perform <i>L'Amant Militaire</i> in Europe at this time, but this is declined because it is 'ideologically impossible' (Edelson: 1975: 277). It is deemed more appropriate to stay at home and continue to apply political pressure there.				

1968				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan.-Feb.	Los Angeles	and other campus	<i>L'Amant Militaire</i> and/or <i>Olive Pits</i>	
Jan. 25: The Mime Troupe is banned from performing <i>Olive Pits</i> at California State College, Fullerton. An across-the-street performance takes place on February 7. The ban leads to the resignation of drama professor George Forest in support of the Mime Troupe.				
Mar. 16-18: Another Troupe off-shoot, the 'Gorilla Marching Band' debuts in Berkeley as part of the 'Peace and Freedom Party' founding convention.				
Apr. 5	Hayward, Ca.	Chabot College	<i>Ruzzante or the Veteran</i> (Beolco/Joan Holden)	The script is a starting point rather than a finished product. Davis oversees the direction or comments alongside actors and others on the piece as it develops.
Apr.			Gutter Puppets ( <i>Metermaid</i> ); ( <i>Little Black Panther</i> )	As above
Apr. 28	Canyon, Ca. (debut)		<i>The Farce of Patelin</i> (R.G. Davis and Jael Weisman)	124 in total – alternating with <i>Ruzzante</i>
Jul. (until Dec. 1973): The Mime Troupe moves to 450 (sometimes given as 455) Alabama Street. The new, larger premises are located in 'an industrial district situated between Portrero Hill and the Mission District. It offers space for a library, kitchen, office, and access to the rooftop. Space provided for local branch of Students For A Democratic Society (SDS). San Francisco Newsreel takes an office there, beginning in August 1968. This group consists of radical filmmakers and distributors with Maoist leanings who are also influenced by the Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers' (source: <a href="http://www.diggers.org/chronology.asp">http://www.diggers.org/chronology.asp</a> ).				
In terms of the Mime Troupe's structure and decision-making process, it is felt at this time that some sort of re-organization is necessary: 'we recognized the need to operate a company with many people, not just a family... We had functioned under an occasional leadership called a Gerontocracy whereby the oldest members became a committee of decision-makers. It didn't work. The oldest members were not at all interested in the day-to-day running of the company. Once in a new space Sandy Archer and Joan Holden delivered a yellow paper declaring a need for a new organization beginning with an Inner Core, a group of five to be elected by the company at large, to decide on the direction and policy of the company. An Inner Core was elected and suggested salaries for all members.' (Davis, 1975: 98) The group agrees upon \$25 per week per person as the basic wage for a company of twenty paid members (including a secretary who is given a more realistically livable weekly wage of \$75). This scheme lasts for some months, but later it has to reduce the fixed amount for members. This creates the paradoxical situation of only being able to retain as members middle-class people whom could otherwise 'afford' to live on such below subsistence incomes. The Inner Core structure lasts until the beginning of 1970.				
Sept. 25-29: 'Radical Theatre Festival' at San Francisco State College. Mime Troupe performs, along with El Teatro Campesino, Bread and Puppet Theatre, Gut Theatre and Berkeley Agit-prop. There are discussions, workshops, panels, notably one where Davis draws the lines between 'radical left' and 'radical right' theatres. 'Radical left' includes those in attendance at the festival. 'Radical right' applies to groups such as the Living Theatre, the Open Theatre, and the Performance Group.				
Oct.	Mid West		<i>Patelin and Ruzzante</i>	
Oct.: Davis visits Japan in order to escape the USA temporarily.				
Dec.			Childrens' Theatre: 'Kill' <i>Santa Claus</i>	

1969				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
Jan.: Rehearsals begin on Bertolt Brecht's <i>The Congress of Whitewashers or Turandot</i> . The cast are involved heavily in researching the work. Chinese Opera is studied in depth. Rehearsals show that it has to be shortened and the order of scenes changed.				
The decision to work on this play comes in the wake of unsuccessful efforts, lasting for more than a year, to develop, in collaborative fashion, an entirely new work provisionally entitled <i>The Life and Times of Ché Guevara as Seen by the Inmates of the United States of America</i> . According to Davis (Davis, 1975: 117): 'It was to be a pageant play on wagons', and was intended to counter the glibness, and the 'heavy Maoist dogmatism' surrounding the use of the term 'guerrilla' at the time. After extensive research and study groups the Troupe cannot come up with a script, or a stage design, so the idea is abandoned.				
Feb.	Northwest/ Vancouver		Patelin/ Gutter Puppets	
Feb. 14: An 'Anti-Military Ball', at Oregon State University, Corvallis, features a 'Women's Drill Team', made up of Mime Troupe women advancing a feminist agenda both within the Mime Troupe and in the public domain.				
Mar. 3			Bookmobile Puppet Show	
Mar. 16: Mime Troupe marches in San Francisco's St. Patrick's Day Parade.				
Mar. 29	Berkeley	Live Oak Park (premiere)	<i>The Congress of Whitewashers or Turandot</i> (Brecht/Svendson)	110 performances in various outdoor locations (some indoors), particularly during July and August. Last performance is Mar. 12 1970
The work is further refined over a 12-month performance period. In performance there are initial problems with audibility and projection and logistics of 11 cast members playing some 40 roles. It is in effect the swan song of the Davis-era Mime Troupe and to some extent provokes a fundamental change in the group's structure and philosophy which, temporarily at least, becomes more Maoist and collectivist.				
Apr.	Southwest		Patelin/ Gutter Puppets/ Gorilla Marching Band	
Apr. 6-7	Many Farms, Arizona	Navajo Community College	Patelin	Cancelled performance; Mime Troupe ejected
May 30: Gorilla Marching Band appears in People's Park Parade, Berkeley.				
Oct.-Nov.: Northwest tour of <i>Congress of Whitewashers</i> .				
Dec. 24-Jan. 1970: Davis takes 'leave of absence to go to Chicago and visit the conspiracy trials' (Davis, 1975: 126). He sits in on the trial and makes contact with those involved, including those behind the scenes. He is inspired to purchase the transcript of the trial and produce it as a pageant 'with the original folks in the re-representation.' This marks the beginning of Praxis, an organisation established by Davis to promote left productions. Although Davis retains his connection to the Mime Troupe until the completion of the season for <i>The Congress of Whitewashers</i> , he effectively leaves the Mime Troupe as of January 1970.				

1970				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Performances
May 16		Ash Grove	<i>The Independent Female or A Man has his Pride</i>	
<p><i>The Independent Female or A Man has his Pride</i> is the first post-Davis work by the Mime Troupe. It is written by Joan Holden and directed by Sandra Archer (Archer leaves shortly thereafter). Other works during 1970 include <i>Telephone Man or Ripping Off Ma Bell</i>, which instructs audience on how to cheat on telephone bills in response to apparently iniquitous phone company charges, and <i>Los Siete</i>, which is based upon the analysis by defence lawyers of a case involving the alleged killing of a police officer by seven Latino youths. The Mime Troupe also works on <i>Seize the Time</i>, based on Bobby Seale's book of the same name, about the 'Chicago Eight Conspiracy' trial. This debuted in the latter part of the year and toured in early 1971.</p> <p>The philosophy, decision-making, and working processes of the Mime Troupe begin to restabilise from this time onwards. After some internal conflict between hard-line communists and non-ideological 'hangers-on' who subsequently leave, a less doctrinaire and less communist-inspired collective structure is instituted. The term 'socialist' comes to replace 'communist' in descriptions of the group's politics. Although writing or adapting of texts for performance is regarded as a group activity, and roles are assigned as equitably as possible throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the main guidance, if not named leadership, comes from members such as Joan Holden, Dan Chumley (who subsequently marry), Arthur Holden, and Sharon Lockwood (who also marry). Holden becomes the principal resident playwright, and Dan Chumley becomes increasingly involved in directing. Arthur Holden also continues to be involved in directing work from time to time. The extent to which a more egalitarian decision-making structure has characterised the post-Davis era remains conjectural, as does the degree to which politics have overshadowed artistic discipline and experimentation.</p>				

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Appendix H: The Theatricality of the San Francisco Diggers - a chronology 1965-1968

Published San Francisco Digger ‘histories’, such as they are (Coyote, 1988; Grogan, 1972; Perry, 1985), tend to focus upon the arrival of Emmett Grogan in San Francisco in 1966 as the precipitating event in the formation of the group. This is partly because for many years the only widely available Digger narrative was Grogan’s autobiographical *Ringolevio*, first published in 1972 (details below). Peter Coyote’s recent memoir, *Sleeping Where I Fall* (1998), does not greatly re-examine the Grogan version of events, although it does give more credit to Peter Berg as key architect of Digger dramaturgy. The contributions of Berg, Judy Goldhaft, and, to a lesser extent, Kent Minault, remain somewhat understated, although Doyle (1997) is more enlightening in the second chapter of his doctoral thesis on the Diggers. However this omission has arisen, it seems partly due to the fact that Berg and Goldhaft have to date been unconcerned about publicly claiming ownership or authorship of Digger events, and partly because some of the nascent Digger activity took place under San Francisco Mime Troupe auspices, making it difficult to define a starting point for ‘Digger theatre’, or the philosophy of ‘guerrilla theatre’ and ‘life-acting’ developed by Berg. For example, Doyle suggests, after noting the presence of Berg’s writings in a part (23 April 1966) of R.G. Davis’s Mime Troupe files, that ‘Berg’s theory of guerrilla theater, as distinguished from Davis’s, was already well formed a half-year prior to the organisation of the Diggers, and it also predated Grogan’s arrival on the scene’ (183 fn.171). At least one founding Digger, Judy Goldhaft (formerly Rosenberg), was a Mime Troupe veteran, having joined in 1962. Peter Berg and Kent Minault joined the Mime Troupe in 1965, as did Peter Cohon (Coyote), although Cohon’s autobiography is a little ambiguous on the precise point at which he became a member. Goldhaft, Berg, and Cohon, like Grogan (and Mime Troupe founder R.G. Davis), were originally from the New York area, and all of them (except Davis) left by mid-1967.

In any event, with this lacuna in mind, I have included in the chronology below some events usually associated with San Francisco Mime Troupe history in order to indicate an earlier genesis for the Diggers. Furthermore, Peter Berg has kindly pointed out to me that many of the Digger street events were conceived and executed as theatrical events, being accompanied (or pre-advertised) by street programmes and leaflets, and that these events involved thousands of participants. I have therefore highlighted the theatrical, or ‘life-acting’ events, as Berg terms them, accordingly in the table. Nevertheless, much of the material contained below is drawn from the comprehensive Digger chronology painstakingly assembled by Eric Noble, and made available on the official Digger website: [http://www.diggers.org/asp/chrono\\_diggers.asp](http://www.diggers.org/asp/chrono_diggers.asp).

1965		
Date	Location/Source	Event/Comments
May	924 Howard Street (San Francisco Mime Troupe studios)	R.G. Davis reads ‘Guerrilla Theatre’ essay to Mime Troupe members. Peter Boag had recently coined the term in reference to the idea of revolution being effected by a small, mobile, and disciplined cadre of revolutionaries, a la Che Guevara, rather than through large organisations. The revised version, ‘Guerrilla Theatre: 1965’, appears in the following year’s <i>Tulane Drama Review</i> 10 4 (Winter 1966).
c. Feb.- Mar.	UC Berkeley	<i>Centerman</i> , written and directed by Peter Berg, adapted from Wolfgang Borchert’s ‘Dandelion’, is performed as a ‘guerrilla theatre’ action i.e., without introduction or explanation, to crowd at Free Speech Movement protest rally at Berkeley. The Mime Troupe debut of this work takes place on April 16 1966 at the Traps Festival (Davis, 1975: 203).



1966		
Date	Location/Source	Event/Comments
Apr. 16	924 Howard Street (San Francisco Mime Troupe studios)	'Traps Festival': This includes <i>Jack Off! A Girly Show</i> (Judy Goldhaft), <i>Mirage</i> (Peter Weiss) a film, and <i>Centerman</i> (Borchert/Berg). The event as a whole is a parody of Ken Kesey's (Acid) 'Trips Festivals', which are being staged in the Bay Area at this time.
Jun. 19	Colonial Room of the Saint Francis Hotel	'Teach-On LSD Benefit': Part of a fund-raising promotional event for Timothy Leary; includes rock bands such as Big Brother and the Holding Company and Sopwith Camel. Speakers include Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure. The Mime Troupe performs <i>Search and Seizure</i> , written and directed by Peter Berg.
c. Jun./ Jul.	Haight-Ashbury	Billy Murcott aka Billy Landout arrives in San Francisco and joins up with Emmett Grogan.
Sept. 15	Jabberwock nightclub, Berkeley. Also Santa Cruz.	<i>Output You</i> : Another guerrilla theatre piece written and directed by Peter Berg and based upon human subjugation to computers. It is performed by Emmett Grogan and Billy Murcott. The Mime Troupe debut of this takes place on September 27 (Davis, 1975: 206).
Sept. 20	<i>City of San Francisco Oracle (The Oracle)</i>	This first edition contains a review of Mime Troupe's play <i>Search and Seizure</i> (Peter Berg), by Mime Trouper and Digger, Kent Minault. The issue also contains a laudatory profile by John Brownson on the Dutch 'Provos' (provocateurs), an anarchist group based in Amsterdam ( <i>Life</i> magazine had run a feature in July 1966 on the Provos). This apparently fuels discussions amongst Grogan, Murcott, Peter Berg, Judy Goldhaft, Peter Cohon, and others about forming a similar radical political collective in the Bay Area.
Sept. 27	Hunter's Point and Fillmore District	Riots ensue after Matthew Johnson is shot and killed by police at Hunter's Point. A curfew is imposed by State Governor Edward Brown (until October 2). This is a signal event for formation of the Diggers, according to the 'Delving the Diggers' article in the <i>Berkeley Barb</i> (see below), and popular lore.
Sept. 30	Cafes, bookshops, noticeboards in Haight-Ashbury district	The first of the Digger Papers or 'broad-sides' i.e., broadsheets, is produced on the Gestetner mimeograph machine belonging to SDS, which is housed at the Mime Troupe loft at 924 Howard Street. A manifesto calling for the reorganisation of the Mime Troupe is posted at the Mime Troupe loft at this time.
Oct. 1	Mission District	'Artists' Liberation Front Street Fair': Co-ordinated by the Diggers and involving a number of Mime Troupe members, it is the first of four fairs during October. The ALF had formed partly as a result of the perceived misallocation of arts funding in the Bay Area by city authorities.
Oct. 2	San Francisco City Hall	A picket of City Hall is mounted by the Artists Liberation Front, using an empty coffin and street procession, to protest the killing of Matthew Johnson and the curfew imposed by Governor Brown (Diggers are involved).
c. Oct. 2	Ashbury Street/Panhandle	Free food is delivered daily by the Diggers around 4p.m. The food is prepared at a nearby Clayton Street Digger 'pad'. Grogan (1972) and Coyote (1998) readily admit that the bulk of the free food preparation was carried out by a handful of tireless Digger women. Deliveries last until June 1967, by which time the Haight-Ashbury has become overrun with young people. Recipients of the free food are encouraged to pass through a 12-foot tall 'Free Frame of Reference' (also described by Perry [1985: 104] as 'thirteen-foot square') in order to symbolically change their perspective and become free. Doyle (1997) notes that Peter Berg traces the frame idea to John Cage's suggestion that whatever one puts a frame around becomes art (148).

Oct. 6	Panhandle	A 'Love Pageant Rally' is organised by Haight-Ashbury shop owners (H.I.P.) and others, and draws scorn from the Diggers. It reinforces their idea of doing community work rather than merely hosting events.
Oct. 21	<i>Berkeley Barb</i>	'Delving the Diggers' by George Metevsky (possibly Emmett Grogan). This is the first statement of Digger philosophy in the news media, and apart from manifesto-style remarks, it announces free food gatherings in the Panhandle and distribution of the 'Digger Papers'.
Oct. 31	Intersection of Haight and Ashbury	'The Intersection Game': Written and directed by Peter Berg, this is part of a Digger event billed as the 'Full Moon Public Celebration of Halloween' at the intersection of Haight and Ashbury. According to an article in the <i>Berkeley Barb</i> (November 4 1966), the wooden 'Free Frame of Reference' that they had used at the Panhandle Free Food gatherings over the past few weeks was brought along to accompany the following: 'Two giant puppets, on loan from the San Francisco Mime Troupe... performed in an improvised skit called, 'Any Fool on the Street' (written and directed by Peter Berg). The puppets moved back and forth through the Frame, encouraging bystanders to do so as well, thereby changing their frame of reference. The Diggers meanwhile distributed approximately 75 smaller versions of the Frame made out of yellow-painted laths six inches square which hung from a neckstrap. This was followed by a game of 'Intersection,' which was played by people crossing the intersection in a way that traced as many different kinds of polygons as possible (Perry describes this as a kind of 'anti-automobile sit-in'). Within an hour (around 6 p.m.) a crowd of some 600 people had gathered to take part in these activities. The assembly attracted several squad cars and a paddy wagon with the result that the puppeteers, and three other Diggers were arrested....' Indeed, the arresting police officer found himself arguing with and arresting the eight-foot tall puppets in a street theatre scene very much in keeping with the <i>commedia dell'arte</i> style being used by the Mime Troupe at the time. The article also noted that a garage (on Page Street) was being renovated that week to house a 24-hour 'Frame of Reference Exchange', in essence a free store providing goods to the needy (see Perry's description below). To a certain degree it was the arrest and subsequent acquittal (November 27) of the five Diggers (who were also at that time still members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe) that propelled the Diggers into the media spotlight.

Nov. 18	<i>Berkeley Barb</i>	<p>'The Ideology of Failure' by George Metevsky (possibly Emmett Grogan again): 'We're not fooled anymore by the romantic trappings of the marketeers of expanded consciousness. Love isn't a dance concert with a light show at \$3 a head. It isn't an Artist Liberation Front 'Free' Fair with concessions for food and pseudo psychedelia. It is the SF Mime Troupe performing Free Shows in the parks while it is being crushed by a furious \$15,000 debt... It is free food in the Panhandle where anyone can do anything with the food they bring to each other. It is Love... To show love is to fail. To love to fail is the Ideology of Failure. Show love. Do your thing. Do it for FREE...' Doyle points out that this was the first documented use of the phrase 'do your [own] thing' (106).</p>
Nov. 25 - Dec. 3	Free Frame of Reference Store, 1762 Page Street	<p>'Free Meatfeast Thanksgiving Dinner': This event heralds the opening of the first recorded 'free store' (on December 3) at a disused six-car garage. 'The garage was officially known as the Free Frame of Reference. The big yellow-painted wooden frame was brought there between Panhandle feeds. Somebody had found a stack of window frames which the Diggers nailed to the front of the garage. The Free Frame was being used as an experimental store with boxes of household items free for the taking, free because it's yours.'... If anyone asked who was in charge, a Digger would answer vigorously, 'You are!' This was theater, this was 'assuming freedom' – and also, like the motif of anonymity, it was a shrewd cover. The police couldn't single out anyone as the responsible party in this operation, a useful precaution given the frequent presence of stolen goods in the boxes... As long as the rent was paid... the garage could conceivably be used for anything' (Perry, 1985: 108-9). Doyle: 'In Peter Berg's formulation, the free store was 'a social art form' whose aim was to 'liberate ground held by consumer wardens and establish territory without walls' (151).</p>
Nov. 25	<i>Berkeley Barb</i>	<p>'In Search of a Frame': Signed 'Zapata', it is another article attributed to the Diggers and it encourages people to apply pressure on the authorities for free events, and it castigates the Haight merchants for their commercial exploitation of the 'psychedelic revolution'. It also includes the following: 'One more frame of reference: Man is a herd animal. Ecologically the herd is a protective device. It is also warm and comforting in the dark'.</p>



Nov. 27	Hall of Justice	Charges against the five Diggers arrested during the Halloween 'Intersection Game' event are dismissed. A photograph appears in the <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> , showing the group on the steps of the Hall of Justice striking a series of defiant poses. No identifying names are given, in keeping with the Digger policy of anonymity, to avoid both the pitfalls of 'ego-tripping' leadership and to protect members from persecution and co-opting by 'the system'. When it is discovered that one of the group was called Emmett Grogan, this becomes the standard name for all to use when questioned. Alternatively, a Digger answers that his or her name is 'Free', in keeping with the philosophy of 'Free' - this later causes consternation when Digger concepts spread beyond the Bay Area (there are Digger groups in many major cities within 12 months). This is particularly so when people such as Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, who commandeer Digger terminology for their 'Yippie' organisation, use the term 'free' in situations that the San Francisco Diggers see as media self-aggrandisement and grandstanding (Hoffman contends it is 'media-freaking').
Dec. 17	Haight Street, to Park Street Police Station, then to South of Market downtown (4 miles)	The 'Death of Money and Birth of the Haight' parade: Conceived and written by Peter Berg, it is described by Perry as follows: 'It started at 5:00 p.m. with most of the Mime Troupe silently passing out various paraphernalia on the street: pennywhistles, automobile rearview mirrors, flowers, lollipops, incense, candles, bags of grass (lawn clippings) and signs reading "Now!" Three hooded figures carried a silver dollar sign on a stick. A black-clad modern Diogenes carrying a kerosene lamp preceded a black-draped coffin borne by six pallbearers wearing Egyptianesque animal masks. Other Mime Troupe members, including the Gargoyle Singers - who had recently been arrested for "begging" while singing Christmas carols outside a North Beach topless nightclub, all made up like cripples and dwarves from the Middle Ages - walked down the sidewalk in two groups on either side of the street, chanting "oooh," "aaah," "sssh" or "be cool" as people tootled on the pennywhistles... Over a thousand people had come for the parade, of which the Diggers had promised, "We will continue until the Diggers feel it beautiful to stop"' (1985: 114-15).  Doyle suggests the attendance figure was closer to 2,000 (1997: 152). One of the 'songs' is 'Get Out My Life Why Don't You Babe' sung to Chopin's Death March. Members of the local Hell's Angels chapter participate.
Dec. 24	Hamilton Methodist Church	'Christmas Eve for Hippies': This is a combined Digger/Hamilton Church free Christmas dinner. After dinner there is a religious service at which congregation takes LSD.
Dec. 27-28	1762 Page Street	Closure of first Free Frame of Reference Store by building inspectors on grounds of health violations - a fabrication as Diggers see it. The premises are then trashed by the Diggers. The wooden Frame of Reference is broken up and used by building inspectors to board up the building.

1967		
Date	Location/Source	Event/Comments
Jan. 1	Panhandle	A 'New Year's Wail' party thrown by Hell's Angels in appreciation of Diggers efforts to free chapter members arrested in 'Death of Money' parade of December 17. Diggers serve donated whale meat to attendees, hence the 'New Year's Whale' pun by them.
Jan. 8	520 Frederick Street, Haight-Ashbury	Opening of the new Digger storefront and feeding centre. It is run by Arthur Lisch and is raided by police the same day it opens.
Jan. 10	Haight-Ashbury	Chester Anderson and Claude Hayward launch the Communication Company. A hip printing service, it immediately puts itself in the full service of the Diggers.
Jan. 12	North Beach	'Thank You to the Diggers': A San Francisco Poets' reading (Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Lew Welch, Lenore Kandel et al.).
Jan. 14	Polo Field, Park Stadium, Golden Gate Park	'Human Be-In' or 'Gathering of the Tribes': This event is organised by a number of Haight-Ashbury Independent Proprietors (H.I.P.). The Diggers are initially hostile to the proposal because of the commercial and exploitative connotations, and they apply intense pressure on Haight-Ashbury shopkeepers to drop the idea. However, a mediation meeting between Grogan and Berg, and Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder leads them to participate by providing free food. Doyle notes that the Diggers could not resist the opportunity to make a political point, however, which involved a guerrilla night raid on the eve of the event. A free-form sculpture, hung with slaughter house cast-offs was placed in the middle of the rugby field. Unfortunately, all they disrupted was the following day's rugby game as they had misjudged the location of activities (Doyle: 166-67).
Feb. 5	520 Frederick Street, Haight-Ashbury	The Free Frame of Reference Store II is closed by city officials.
Feb. 8	Howard Presbyterian Church	A confrontational open meeting takes place between Diggers and H.I.P. merchants about continuing commercialisation of the Haight and the shopkeepers' conciliatory attitudes towards police.
Feb.	All Saints Episcopal Church, 1350 Waller at Masonic	A new Digger base is established here with the blessing of Father Leon Harris. (N.B. Doyle [1997: 275-87] notes the unusually close Digger connection with various churches in the city, signifying a somewhat ecumenical character to the group, which produced the 'mod monk' jibe in the local community.)
Feb.	1775 Haight Street	New Digger 'crash pad' for homeless
Feb. 17	Straight Theater, Haight Street	Digger crafts class, including tie-dyeing class by Mime Troupe/Digger member Jody Robbins. Although commercial offers are subsequently made to Goldhaft and the other women involved in tie-dyeing they refuse to commercialise and capitalise upon the activity.
Feb. 24 - 25	Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, Tenderloin District	'The Invisible Circus': This is a combined Digger/Artists' Liberation Front 'community happening', or 'carnival of the performing arts'. The entire church and its car park is taken over as an 'environment' for activity from Friday evening until the following day (it is closed down by church officials prematurely at dawn on Saturday). It includes the free dispensing of LSD, special salons for love-making, a mock discussion which is undermined by openly sexual behavior, belly-dancing, psychic foot readings, showing of <i>Night and Fog</i> and pornographic films. An estimated 5000 people pass through the church during the wild proceedings (Doyle [1997]: 167-76; Grogan [1972]: 280-86; Perry [1985]: 145-47).
Feb. 27	1775 Haight Street, 848 Cole Street	Two Digger crash pads are raided by the police

Mid-Mar.	New York	Emmett Grogan goes to New York as a self-styled Digger emissary.
c. Mar.	Digger broadsheet	'Trip Without a Ticket': Written by Peter Berg, the essay discusses guerrilla, or 'ticketless' theatre, saying that it 'intends to bring audiences to liberated territory to create life-actors'. The 'trip' is 'not street-theater, the street is theater'.
Mid-Mar.	901 Cole Street (corner of Cole and Carl Streets)	'The Trip Without a Ticket': This is the new Digger Free Store and is conceived principally by Peter Berg, with assistance from Judy Goldhaft and Kent Minault. Perry gives the following description: 'a corner storefront with plate-glass windows on two sides and a mezzanine balcony. The new Free Store was there, and it served as well as what the Diggers called an 'actional theater' – anybody who dropped in off the street might get caught up, willy-nilly, in Digger-improvised drama. The storefront also housed a crafts school and a child's swing with velvet ropes in the window' (1985: 156). N.B. The swing was designed for adults.
Mar. 15	901 Cole Street	Rally to protest against reinstatement of death penalty in California by recently elected Governor Reagan.
Mar. 26 - Apr. 2	Haight Street, between Masonic and Ashbury,	'Mill-in': The event is intended to disrupt traffic and encourage public 'play' on Easter Sunday. Other 'Barn Dances' are organised over the next week, leading to police arrests (Doyle, 1997: 202-4).
March 27	All Saints Episcopal Church	A televised press conference between Diggers, city officials, and others, takes place concerning the alleged impending invasion of the Haight (now being referred to by hipsters as 'Psychadelphia') by ill-informed and ill-prepared teenagers from all parts of the country (204-7).
c. Mar. 28 - 29	A 'studio apartment', Manhattan	'Theater for Ideas': This is a theatre intellectuals' loft event, attended by Paul Goodman and Emmett Grogan, amongst others. Grogan holds the floor at one point, but is greeted with hostility (368-69). N.B. The 'Theater for Ideas' later moved to the Friends Meeting House, Gramercy Square, and in March 1969 was the scene of a harangue by members of the Living Theatre of Robert Brustein, Richard Schechner, Julian Beck and Judith Malina (who were on the panel) and others during a 'Theatre or Therapy' forum.
Apr. 8	Lower East Side, Manhattan	A 'Clean-in' of Lower East Side scheduled by visiting S.F. Digger Emmett Grogan is usurped by sanitation dept who clean up first.
Apr. 9	Haight Street	'Sweep-in': This is a Digger Broom Brigade initiative to clear trash from Haight Street, and is part of an afternoon's street entertainment that includes an appearance by the Grateful Dead (209-10).
Apr.	30 St. Marks Place, Manhattan	Formal introductions take place between Abbie Hoffman and Emmett Grogan. Grogan passes on Digger pamphlets and leaflets.
Apr.	East Village, Manhattan	Peter Berg (Mime Troupe), Sienna Riffia aka Emma Goldman (after American anarchist of earlier decades) aka Natural Suzanne, Phyllis Wilner, and Jane Lapiner arrive in New York for a brief visit. They meet up with Grogan and take part, informally, in community organising meetings on Lower East Side. At the invitation of Alan Burke, Berg and Riffia also appear on Burke's television show and they deliberately create a shambles, including custard pie-throwing, and usurping Burke's control of the proceedings (371-74).
Jun. 11	Hunter's Point	A 'Happening' is staged in support of Muhammed Ali's refusal to take induction oath when conscripted to the U.S. Army. Berg believes the event was actually a commemoration of Malcolm X.
Jun. 18	Glide Memorial United Methodist Church	'Born Free': This event places Digger poetry within the regular Sunday morning service. Several events are planned for the week of 18-22, solstice week.

Jun. 24		The end of free food in the park.
Jun. 25	Denton, Michigan	Having read the SDS Port Huron Statement (1962), and been invited by Bob O'Keene and Keith Lampe, Berg leads Digger group (Grogan, Murcott, plus Billy Fritsch) to the SDS 'Back to the Drawing Boards' convention at a camp in Denton (between Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids). This was an unofficial 'old guard' regrouping exercise (Gitlin 1989: 225). In describing the theatrical performances of Berg, who was the main 'speaker', or provocateur, and Grogan, Gitlin attributes the dissolution of SDS to ideological blows dealt by the Diggers at this convention (222-30) (Berg recalls that Gitlin was incensed at being told to turn off his tape recorder). Gitlin also notes that Paul Krassner and Abbie Hoffman were present, and, impressed by the Diggers, parlayed their tactics into the 'Yippie' campaign of public acts and publications (from which the Diggers quickly distanced themselves): 'Abbie's story is that he stumbled into the spotlight. In August, two months after Drawing Boards, he led a group to drop dollar bills on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, watching the brokers scramble for them and the ticker tape stop dead, then burning bills for the hordes of reporters as they asked their uncomprehending questions. It wasn't original: the Diggers burned money first, at a demonstration outside the druggy-spiritualist paper <i>East Village Other</i> ' (233). N.B. The Diggers had first burned money in San Francisco. The other well-known architect of the Yippies, Jerry Rubin, was also impressed by the theatrical approach of the Diggers: 'With the counsel of Ronnie Davis, the founder of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Jerry Rubin had already discovered the theatrical values of costuming.' (233)
Jul. 5		The birth of a child, christened Digger Batman, to a Digger prompts the original Diggers (all now more or less ex-Mime Troupe members) to stop using term 'Digger' and use the name 'Free City Collective'.
Jul. 25	272 Sixth Street (skid row)	Begin refurbishing the 482-room Reno Hotel as 'free theater, free movies, free hospital' etc.; project founders because of city regulations.
Jul. 26	Roundhouse, London	Emmett Grogan makes his provocative 'Hitler speech' (which Doyle can find no trace of in published speeches attributed to Hitler) to the audience at the 'Dialectics of Liberation' Conference. It was attended by Allen Ginsberg, Stokely Carmichael, R.D. Laing et al.
Sept. 29		Free City Collective publishes the first <i>Free City Newsletter</i> .
Oct. 6	All Saints Church	'Death of Hippie Freebie i.e., Birth of the Free Man': A parade-cum-wake-cum-procession, on first anniversary of the H.I.P. 'Love Pageant Rally'; intended as a cleansing ceremony to rid Haight-Ashbury of its commercialised counterculture. Organised by Ron Thelin, former owner of the Psychedelic Shop.
Oct. 18	Straight Theater	The 'Runaway Emergency Conference': A symposium bringing together 500 concerned citizens, but run more as a guerrilla theatrical event, with puppets, light shows, audio tapes of 'street kids' telling their stories and other sound effects. The grand finale is a reprise of the Mime Troupe's <i>Bodies</i> , choreographed by Jane Lapiner, featuring nude dance to rock band accompaniment. Raided by the police (Doyle 267-72).



Nov. 5	Straight Theater	'The End of the War': Designed and directed by Peter Berg, a combination of dance, light show, rock music, and satirical speeches; timed to coincide with the general election on November 7, intended to help mobilise the 'hippie' vote, features Bruce Conner, the Steve Miller Band, and Jane Lapiner's dance piece <i>Waiting</i> . Berg suggests that the founder of the San Francisco Exploratorium is inspired by attending this event, especially the no charge aspect of it. There is no charge for admission nor are audience told what to do.
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1968		
Date	Location/Source	Event/Comments
Feb. 25	Haight Street between Stanyon and Masonic	A citizens' traffic ban takes place, advocated for by the Free City Collective and sanctioned by Mayor Alioto. It is initially a festive celebration, playfully reclaiming the street, if not the city, but a similar event the following week has more political overtones (Doyle 288-92).
March 18	Community Design Center (University of California Extension)	'Free City Planning Conference': Conceived and designed by Peter Berg, it is more of an activity-based event than a structured symposium or workshop. The list of invitees is impressive and included main figures in counterculture and political activists (Doyle 297-302).
Mid-Apr.	Civic Center Plaza	'Poetry siege': Readings, designed by Peter Berg, are held daily to emphasise the 'Free city' concept. They continue until June 21 (summer solstice).
May 1	Carousel Ballroom	'Free City Convention': This is an event conceived by Peter Berg and organised by the Free City Collective. Despite some advance promotion, mainly by way of Digger broadsheets and press releases, as a community-focussed ideas and activities forum, the actual conference appears to have been an 'anarchistic love-in' (Doyle 310-20; Perry 286).
Jun. 21-23	Golden Gate Park Panhandle, Washington Square Park, Port Smith Square, Turk Park, Mission Dolores Park	'Summer Solstice Celebration': Conceived by Peter Berg, this is a multipronged effort to 'spread Haightness throughout the city'. Over the three days there are: pre-dawn flares, explosions, trumpets from Twin Peaks; a 'General one-day city-wide strike for better living conditions'; bellydancers dancing on a flatbed truck in the financial district; free lunch at City Hall steps; free live rock bands; free films after dark; events involving grass-roots organisations such as the Mission Rebels and the Black Panthers; free performances of <i>Ruzzante</i> by the San Francisco Mime Troupe; a light/sound show; morning church worship; African American music groups (Doyle 334-39). The aim is to unite local neighbourhood and community groups and encourage mutual cooperation.

From mid-1968 the Diggers began to dissolve as a coherent urban organisation. Emmett Grogan wrote an 'autobiography', using third person narrative (*Ringolevio: A Life Played for Keeps*), which became a countercultural classic. He died in 1978, supposedly as a result of a heroin overdose, but to some, the circumstances of his death are more sinister. Many other founders began to live more permanently on the rural communes that had become associated with the Diggers, such as Olema and Black Bear. Peter Cohon (Coyote) provides an extended, largely autobiographical, narrative on the back-to-the-land activities of erstwhile Diggers. Although he alludes to it in his closing remarks, he does not dwell upon the strong correlation between joint membership of the Diggers and the San Francisco Mime Troupe in the mid-60s, and a subsequent development of commitment to 'bioregional living' and environmental advocacy. This is to say that many of the Digger/Troupers who left the city did not merely sojourn in the countryside as rural communards for a sinecure or for time out. Instead, and as Doyle notes, the exodus appears to have been an extension of the community-finding process that began in the Haight. Many have entered, or re-entered, small and ostensibly very ordinary communities, particularly in Northern California, to embark upon long-term community work that involves ecological restoration, or what is referred to as 'reinhabitation' by people such as Peter Berg and Judy Goldhaft, founders of the Planet Drum Foundation in 1973 (See <http://www.planetdrum.org>). Jane Lapiner and David Simpson, based in Petrolia, Northern California, similarly gravitated towards community work in the environment, their focus being the Mattole River Salmon Restoration Council. Freeman House and others have made similar commitments to rural living and community involvement. Interestingly, the aforementioned appear to have maintained their belief in the power of theatre for enacting social change, starting such groups as 'Reinhabitory Theater', in the case of Judy Goldhaft, and 'Human Nature', in the case of Lapiner and Simpson. Furthermore, R.G. Davis, the original founder of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, was greatly at odds with the *modus operandi* and philosophy of the Diggers as they evolved from within the core of the Mime Troupe. However, he has followed a similar post-Mime Troupe path insofar as he has been interested in Deep Ecology for several years. His most recent work has been an exploration of ecological aesthetics and the use of narrative in 'science and (or in) nature' discourses.

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As noted above the main source for dates and events comes from the on-line Digger archives, researched, compiled, and curated by Eric Noble: <http://www.diggers.org/chronology.asp>

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## Appendix I Chronology of the Performance Group 1967-70

I have drawn mainly upon Schechner (1973), Lichti (1986), and Shephard (1991) in the construction of this chronology. Other information has come from archives, and newspaper and journal articles. The group's productions at the Performing Garage, and its tours and one-off events are set out in the unshaded areas of the table. Information relating to Richard Schechner's early career, Performance Group rehearsal periods, college residencies out of New York, and other factors are contained in the shaded areas of the table.

<i>Richard Schechner: career 1956-mid 1967</i>				
1956: Richard Schechner graduates from Cornell (BA in English with honours).				
1957: Schechner teaches at Johns Hopkins University on a fellowship.				
1958: Schechner graduates with an MA in English from the State University of Iowa. He is drafted into the army and moves South.				
1960: Schechner arrives in New Orleans to teach and to study for PhD in theatre at Tulane University. His PhD subject is Eugene Ionesco.				
1961: Schechner visits Paris. Interviews Ionesco as part of his doctoral research.				
1962: Schechner becomes editor of <i>Tulane Drama Review</i> (TDR), later <i>The Drama Review</i> (TDR). (He remains editor until 1969). Becomes involved in civil rights activities.				
1964-65: Schechner becomes involved with the Free Southern Theater of New Orleans as co-director with John O'Neal and Gilbert Moses. He directs <i>Purlie Victorious</i> at the Free Southern Theater. His job at Tulane does not permit involvement in theatre productions at the university.				
1965-67: Schechner, along with painter Franklin Adams and musician Paul Epstein, forms the New Orleans Group. In 1966 the New Orleans Group presents <i>4/66</i> a Happenning-like event inspired by John Cage, Allen Kaprow, and other Happenings artists. He directs Ionesco's <i>Victims of Duty</i> , which runs for 12 performances in late May 1967 (Lichti, 1986: 38).				
c. Jun.: Schechner moves to New York to take up a professorship at New York University.				
1967				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Comments
Sept. 8	NYC	East Seventh Street (between Avenues C and D)	<i>The Seventh Street Environment</i> (coordinated by Bud Wirstschafter)	Documentary film materials of and by local inhabitants projected in the street as movies, stills, and sound recordings of life histories.
Schechner attends this event. He finds it more meaningfully theatrical than professional or Broadway theatre.				
Oct. 28	NYC	Streets, Port Authority Terminal	<i>Guerrilla Warfare</i>	Schechner directs NYU drama students.
It is a 'staging of a guerrilla-warfare piece, simultaneously taking place at twenty-seven locations both in theatres and on the street' (Sainer, 1997: 19).				
Oct.-Nov.: Jerzy Grotowski and Ryszard Cieslak run a four-week (sometimes reported as five-week) workshop, organised by Schechner, at New York University. Workshop is limited to a select group of NYU students. Schechner participates.				
Nov. 17: Schechner begins his own workshop with NYU students at NYU School of the Arts. The venue is only available for a few weeks.				
Nov. (until Mar. 1968): Schechner rents a room at Community/ Welfare Center, at Tompkins Square Park/Avenue A on the Lower East Side, for workshops and exercises with NYU students. He insists on privacy and locked doors for rehearsals. Saturday mornings are added to rehearsal schedule for group discussions. In January, after considering Ibsen's <i>Peer Gynt</i> amongst other suggestions, Schechner's proposal to work on Euripides' <i>The Bacchae</i> is adopted. The secrecy around rehearsals arouses suspicion and resentment amongst neighbourhood youth. Workshop participants are occasionally threatened, and in late January the group is barred from using the space.				

1968				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Comments
Mar. 1: A disused truck garage at 133 Wooster Street, SoHo, is rented, renovated over the next three months, and renamed 'The Performing Garage'. Exercises continue, and initial exploration of the text of Euripides' <i>The Bacchae</i> is undertaken with a view to presenting an adaptation for the public. Schechner raises a personal bank loan of \$5,000 to rent the space for several months and pay for the renovations (Shephard, 1991: 68). NB. The Performing Garage remains in use as at 2002, principally by the Wooster Group, which evolved out of the Performance Group in the late 1970s.				
Mid-Apr.: Work begins directly on the text of <i>The Bacchae</i> .				
May: The group initiates open workshop/rehearsals of <i>Dionysus in 69</i> on Saturday mornings.				
Unknown date: The Radical Theatre Repertory, a booking agency for radical theatres across the country, is formed by Saul Gottlieb, Mel Howard, and Beverly Landau. Richard Schechner is initially involved.				
Mid-May	NYC	Washington Square Methodist Church	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Birth ritual and opening speeches
The group performs the above as part of the First American Radical Theatre Festival, which includes the Open Theatre, Gut Theatre of Harlem, Pageant Players, and Bread and Puppet Theatre.				
Jun. 6-Jul.	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Opening run (Thursdays through Sundays)
The show opens to mixed reviews, but the play quickly becomes popular with bohemian community. On weekends audience numbers range from 190-270.				
Jun. 10-Aug.: Schechner leaves for South America on a pre-arranged Ford Foundation-funded visit two weeks after the show opens; Joan McIntosh, one of the cast members, and Schechner's romantic partner, joins him there in late August. The other cast members take a vacation during August.				
Jul.: Film-maker Brian DePalma films <i>Dionysus in 69</i> .				
Sept.: Open auditions are held for new group members (Rozanne Levine had left after end of first run). Nudity is sometimes part of the audition. Plans for a Mid West tour in January 1969 of <i>Dionysus in 69</i> are announced by Schechner. Salaries are between \$50 and \$100 a week. Dissent about management of the group is voiced by some members who want a more collective approach.				
Oct. 3-Dec.	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Production re-opens after a month's break.
Reviews are mostly positive and the group plays to good houses. 'Perhaps at no other time in the life of the Group did our collective future seem so bright nor our individual fortunes so secure.' (Shephard 179)				
Oct.-Feb. 1969	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Makbeth</i>	Improvisations and workshops
These rehearsals focus on themes of prophecy, violence and fascism but not Shakespeare's text directly.				
Oct.: Brian DePalma films <i>Dionysus in 69</i> again.				
Oct.: Schechner's recent absence has polarised views about the structure of the group into 'Maoists' (Finley, Shephard, Dia), who advocate strong leadership, and 'Revisionists' (Smith, McDermott, Barclay, Bosseau), who advocate rule by whole group (Shephard 168-70): 'The fact remained, however, that Schechner was absent during a critical period in the Group's development, and things could never return to the way they were' (180).				
Nov.: Jerzy Grotowski attends a performance of <i>Dionysus in 69</i> and William Shephard (Pentheus), upon his own admission, shows off, breaking bones in his foot during a chase sequence (172). Grotowski likes the performance environment but little else, including the acting, which he regards as self-indulgent. Schechner suggests nudity in certain scenes and the group agrees. Full nudity is introduced in certain scenes.				
Nov.-Jun. 1969: Group therapy/encounter sessions, run initially by Dr. Larry Sacharow from Daytop Village (a substance abuse recovery facility), are held at Performing Garage. These sessions are precipitated by Patrick McDermott's outburst during a rehearsal. They are performing <i>Dionysus in 69</i> three nights a week while rehearsing <i>Makbeth</i> .				
Dec. 10: Schechner writes a note to the group entitled 'On Rules & The Withering Away of the Director'. It is a guarded justification for rules in the group working process.				



1969				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Comments
Jan. 18	Colorado Springs	Colorado College	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Nudity is allowed at this performance.
This is the first date of short tour of the Mid West organised by the Radical Theatre Repertory.				
Jan. 23	Minneapolis	University of Minnesota	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Nudity is prohibited.
Jan. 24	St. Paul	Firehouse Theatre	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Nudity is allowed. The venue is similar to the Performing Garage.
The group finds that audience responses vary dramatically on tour, a marked departure from the New York environment to which they have become accustomed: 'I believe that our success at the Firehouse was largely due to the fact that we were performing for an audience whose social and cultural characteristics were most similar to those of us in the Group than I think we had ever encountered before. Essentially, we were all part of a young, white, artistic, middle-class, countercultural milieu' (Shephard 195).				
Jan. 24	St. Paul	Firehouse Theatre	'Choices I'	Ecstasy workshop developed between members of TPG and Firehouse Theatre.
Jan. 25	Detroit	(abandoned nightclub)	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	
Jan. 26	Ann Arbor	University of Michigan	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Cast arrested for indecent exposure.
Feb.	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Resumption of New York run.
Mar.-Jun.	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Makbeth</i>	Text-based rehearsals; visceral exercises; material reflecting the dynamics of the group.
May: Sam Blazer, an original member of the group, is voted out at Schechner's prompting. This is later regarded as a precipitating factor in the group's break-up (at the end of the year).				
Jul. 1: Schechner has the lawyer for the Wooster Group Inc. draft a Memorandum between Schechner and the Board of Directors, guaranteeing him absolute authority in his role as Executive and Artistic Director.				
Jul.-Aug.	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Makbeth</i>	End of group workshops, cast assignments, design work Script composed by R.S.
Jul. 27	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Close of run
According to publicity information attached to a later article in the <i>Toronto Daily Star</i> (Mon. Jan 4 1971) <i>Dionysus in 69</i> had at this point numbered 165 performances to some 44 000 people.				
Jul. 27: Schechner issues a notice to members of the group dictating the terms of their employment and the authority held by Schechner as director.				
Sept.	Belgrade, Yugoslavia	Belgrade International Theatre Festival	<i>Dionysus in 69</i>	Festival organisers invite Performance Group to perform.
Sept.: <i>Makbeth</i> rehearsals continue at Baotic, Yugoslavia, mostly outdoors in open fields (meanwhile Performing Garage is being modified for <i>Makbeth</i> set). The group, some with their families, rent a villa for 3-4 weeks near Hercig Novi while they rehearse. The group lacks cohesion and there is regular internal conflict.				
Oct.-Nov.	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Makbeth</i>	Open rehearsals
Dec.	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Makbeth</i>	Premiere
The production closes prematurely in early January due to poor houses. Reviews are mixed but comparisons to <i>Dionysus in 69</i> are unfavourable. It is neither subsequently revived nor toured.				

1970				
Date	Location	Venue	Production	Comments
Jan.: Legal threats and public statements are made regarding who has control of the Performance Group, which has split into factions in the aftermath of <i>Makbeth</i> . William Shephard has already left to study with Jerzy Grotowski on a Fulbright Scholarship.				
Feb.: Schechner withdraws temporarily from involvement with the Performance Group. One faction occupies the theatre on Schechner's condition that the group has occupancy until September 1, 1970 or until it fails to pay the rent.				
Mar.: Schechner and three others (Joan McIntosh, Stephen Borst, Spalding Gray – all of whom had worked on <i>Makbeth</i> ) revive the Performance Group and audition for new members.				
May: The Performing Garage reverts to Schechner's control.				
May	NYC	Electric Circus	<i>Government Anarchy</i>	
This is a participatory event commissioned by Ted Becker of Civil Liberties Union. The piece includes labelling and ordering about of audience members. It has overtones of the Milgram shock treatment simulation and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty.				
Jul.-Aug. (7 weeks): The Performance Group is in residency at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz. Workshops are held with students. The group lives communally on campus.				
Sept.: Schechner is in residence at Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont. He conducts a nakedness workshop 'Choices 2', and later another called 'Groupings'. The student workshops indirectly feed into <i>Commune</i> . He also sees Bread and Puppet Theatre's <i>Domestic Resurrection</i> while at Goddard.				
Dec. 17	NYC	Performing Garage	<i>Commune</i> opens	Reviews are mixed but houses are good.
1971				
Mar. 28-Apr. 2: Rhode Island Festival 'Theatre '71'. <i>Commune</i> is performed as part of a programme that includes the Bread and Puppet Theatre, the Open Theatre, and the Manhattan Project.				
Jun. 9: Final performance in the first run of <i>Commune</i> at the Performing Garage.				
Jul.-Aug.: The group is in residence at the University of Rhode Island (URI), Rhode Island. It is housed at a farm in Narragansett. Activities include: a 30-person ecstasy-dance workshop; nakedness workshop; 'Arrangements'; later another variant, <i>Clothes</i> . The group prefers to work in a small scene shop rather than the university's giant, barely finished auditorium.				
Oct.-Apr. 1972: Schechner is in India/Asia– Elizabeth LeCompte directs the second season of <i>Commune</i> ; McIntosh is also in Asia for much of that time.				
Dec.: A brief break is taken from the second season of <i>Commune</i> .				
1972				
May: A new legal structure for the Performance Group is drawn up, partly as a result of group members telling Schechner they feel manipulated. They demand a more democratic structure. Although it is not a collective, there is more power-sharing than was the case with earlier versions of the Performance Group.				
Summer: The group is in residency at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Work includes a 'real-time' version of <i>Commune</i> for students to experience at the College Auditorium – the length, including warm-ups is four and a half hours (a typical show is 90 minutes). A collaborative piece with students, entitled <i>Clothes (II)</i> , is performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery.				
Nov.: During a short festival season in Paris, France, the structure of <i>Commune</i> is changed in order to re-enliven the production.				
Nov./ Dec.: <i>Commune</i> ends its run.				

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